

# HELPING FRANCE

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Ruth Gaines



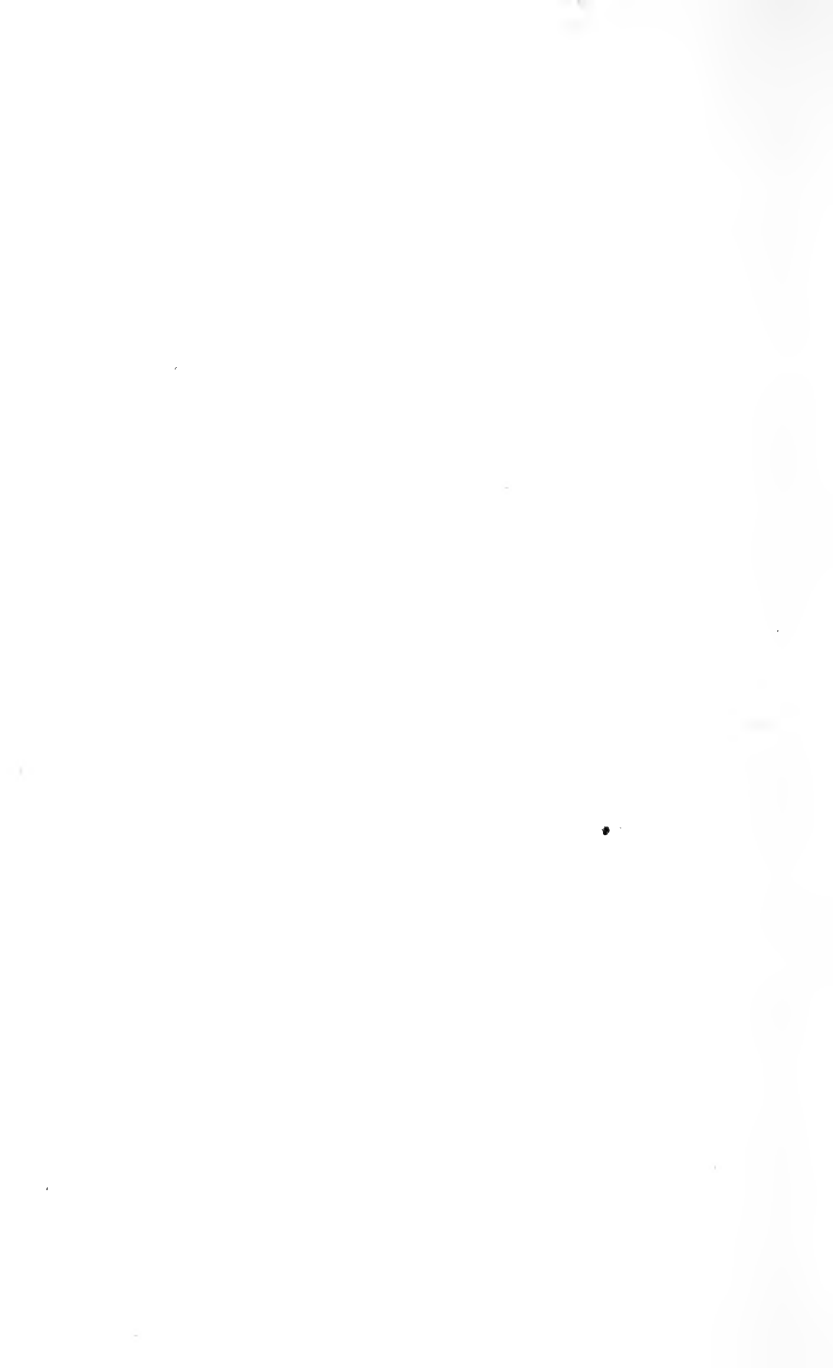
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# HELPING FRANCE

*The Red Cross in  
the Devastated Area*

BY

RUTH GAINES

AUTHOR OF "A VILLAGE IN PICARDY," ETC.



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## PREFACE

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A FRENCH newspaper correspondent was conducted one day through the Paris offices of the American Red Cross. He was vastly and courteously impressed both by what he saw and by his guide. "But," he writes, "I cannot name to you the person who showed me about because he was an officer, and I suppose that in America as in France the uniform fosters and expresses the wish for a loss of identity." It was charmingly put, delicately imagined. Best of all, it is true.

Our American Red Cross in France, accused by some of aggressiveness, practicality and all the pushing faults of our young democracy, has nevertheless the innate shyness of its youth and of its singleness of purpose. All its hope is that it may have helped to alleviate suffering and advance the hour of victory.

For this reason, no names of Red Cross workers will be found in the pages of this book. They have acted merely as the representatives of our Red Cross in France and are by their own request anonymous.

The author regrets only that thanks can not be given where due to the many colleagues—and many of them in inconspicuous positions—whose help has made this record possible.

THE AUTHOR.

PARIS,  
February, 1919.

## NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

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IT has been the aim of the soldier-artists of France to publish to all the world the desecration of her ancient monuments and cherished soil. To this fact we owe the remarkable series of woodcuts, etchings and paintings of her ruins, from which we have drawn freely for this record. Here, as in every manifestation of life, the French have found beauty also. As M. Georges d'Esparbés writes in the preface to that rare album, "Noyon, Guiscard, Ham," by M. Armand Guéritte, "When I had under my eyes the aquafortes which M. Guéritte has portrayed of his countryside in the invaded territory, a great pity pierced me before that aspect of the motherland, of which these drawings showed me the wounds. I did not see beyond that: my country destroyed. . . .

## viii      Note on the Illustrations

If this work is so lovely, it is because we divine that its purpose is, above all, to be of use, and that purpose renders it again lovelier; because its reason for being is perhaps the highest reason of art."

The same purpose, from a constructive point of view, has animated French architects. Plans for French reconstruction have kept pace with German destruction. Hence we have series such as that of M. Georges Wybo, from which, by permission, we have drawn our chapter headings: "Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France." "In order to protect a patrimony which is dear to us," M. Wybo has drawn these examples of typical regional architecture. They will serve as an inspiration in rebuilding the ruins.

When our soldiers pass through the rural districts of France, they may see in the village halls, if they will, posters of welcome bearing the legends: "Peasants of France, salute the soldiers of free America who come by the millions to mingle their blood with that of our

sons, to preserve us in the right to cultivate our fields, and to prevent the barbarians from depriving us of our hard-won liberties," or "The Heart of America. In the interior, as with the armies, no suffering is a matter of indifference to the American Red Cross."

Conversely, American artists, such as Miss A. M. Upjohn, have made their contribution to France. The fidelity, the sympathy of her portraits are those not alone of the artist, but of the relief worker who has lived among and loved the peasants of devastated France.





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## **HELPING FRANCE**





*In Front of the Church at Saint-Cernin.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo.  
Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

# HELPING FRANCE

## CHAPTER I

### “HOME SERVICE”

**I**F there is one division above all others of the American Red Cross activities for the soldier which the American Expeditionary Force in France holds dear, it is, I venture to state, that of the Bureau of Home Service. Many a soldier is anxious over wife or sweetheart, or aged parents, left, too often, without

adequate means of support, or unheard from, it may be for months. The Home Service bridges the thousands of miles of silence, and relieves suspense with aid, or best of all, with information. Infinite pains are taken in this service; millions of dollars spent. To what end? Primarily that the American soldier, freed of anxiety, may be a more efficient pawn in the great game of war.

It is also, I venture to state, in its rôle of home service, that is, of service to the soldier's family, that the American Red Cross has made its most valuable contribution to the French Army as well, and to the French nation during the war. For it is in terms of home service that the activities of the Department of Civilian Relief of the American Red Cross in France can best be interpreted to America. It is according to the moral even more than to the material evaluation of this service that the millions of Red Cross members, who have by their sacrifices and their contributions made it possible, should take



stock of their contribution to the Great War.

Picture to yourself the mental state of a French soldier mobilized hastily in 1914 in the northern regions of France, so soon overrun and so tenaciously held by the enemy. Multiply him by thousands. Send him through the campaigns of the Marne, of the bitterly contested Chemin des Dames, of the defense of Verdun, if you will, and bring him thus to the little hamlet whence he started. What will he find? What did he find? I quote from an eye witness,\* whose company was just going into repose after twenty-two days in the front line trenches, twenty-two days in the “hell of Verdun.” They saw, along the road, “a modest house, which had been disemboweled by an exploding shell. Its steps were half demolished, its blinds hung crazily; the gaping windows showed the emptiness of the interior. ‘My house,’ cried a man suddenly, and darted in. It was not

\* Raymond Joubert: Verdun.

difficult to do, since the wicket of the little garden, held in place by only one hinge, flapped to and fro in the wind.

"The man, when we saw him again," continued the narrator, "was all agog, his arms waving, his body convulsed with hilarious surprise. Everything was reduced to dust in his house, and methodically and minutely destroyed. He had good cause to laugh! He would never have believed his misfortune so complete."

And what of his family, his wife, his children, his parents? In every case, one of two things had happened. They had either remained to be taken prisoners by the Germans, or they had fled before them, fugitives. All degrees of misery are comprised in these two classifications. They make the subject matter of two main divisions of our Red Cross civilian relief; that of rehabilitation, acting in the devastated area, and that of refugees, following the families in their dispersion into every department of France. Yet there can

be no hard and fast distinction; for civilian prisoners, sent into slavery in Germany and later shipped back by the thousands daily, became refugees; and there were thousands more, refugees from destroyed villages, gathered into the larger as yet undestroyed centers in the devastated territory itself. In short, the story of rehabilitation in the devastated area, which is all the present volume pretends to, is the story in epitome, of all Red Cross home service in France.

Civilian prisoners! America has heard of them, and shuddered at the revival by Germany of the methods of pre-Christian warfare, in this twentieth century. “You have sat at the funeral of dear sons,” cried a member of the Belgian Relief Commission working on the German side of the lines, “But you have never sat at the funeral of a city.”\* And he goes on to describe in poignant terms the first levy of the citizens of Mons. All the night, after the deportation, he walked the

\* John H. Gade: National Geographic Magazine.

streets of that stricken city, unable to sleep, equally unable to escape from the shrieks of the bereaved. Mons, Valenciennes, Lille and a score of others—their sorrows were the same. Counting the last and most infamous deportation of fourteen thousand young lads and graybeards just before the armistice, there were forty thousand old men and women, young men and maidens carried into slavery from Lille alone. "I saw," says an eye witness of this last atrocity, "I saw, in August, 1914, our valorous regiments set forth for the war. I saw, in October, 1918, the interminable columns of civilians set forth into exile, and I remarked in the latter, at the end of four years of weakening occupation, as in the former, on the threshold of glory, the same bearing, the same faith, the same valiance, the same anxiety to do honor to France, and to proclaim on high its heroism and its mighty vitality."\* The words of the Old Testament recur like a dirge: "How

\* Pierre Bosc: *Les Allemands à Lille*.

doth the city sit solitary that was full of people, how is she become a widow that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!”

Lille was a great manufacturing city, forming with Roubaix and Turcoing, her neighbors and companions in misfortune, the pre-war triumvirate of textile industries in France. Arras, Cambrai, Lille, famous in our ears to-day as landmarks in the flux of battles, were formerly famous for the productions to which they gave their names, arras, cambric, and lisle. “Even the Sultan knew well the tapestries of Arras,”\* in the fourteenth century.

Yet it is not in the destroyed cities, not even in Soissons or Reims, rich in historic associations—though these are referred to as “murdered”—that the heart of France is centered. The cities of the Northern provinces grew up out of the small industries of the vil-

\* Albert Demangeon: *La Picardie*.

lages. Lille, Arras, Amiens, all took the produce of the country, the flax, the wool of the flocks, even the lucid waters of the Somme, as the raw material of their wealth. To a larger extent than most manufacturing centers, they depend still for their hands—or did before the war—on the winter leisure of the farmers. North, south, east, west, wherever you go in France, it is the land that is the source of individual, of national wealth.

The land and the people, they are inextricably bound together. Books are written explaining the character of the peasant (paysan) by the character of the locality (pays) which has bred him, and his fathers and grandfathers before him. The texture of the soil, the nature of the crop, have determined the routine of his life, the style of his building, the temper of his soul. Two-thirds to nine-tenths of the farmlands in the invaded departments are owned by the farmers themselves. Of these, the small farmers or peas-





*A Poor Village of France.*

*Un Pauvre Village de France: René Benjamin. Woodcuts by Jean Perrier.  
G. Weil & Co., Paris.*



ants make up the bulk, “each family having its house, its land, and passing on to the children its home, its traditions, its agricultural implements.”\* The family, the home (foyer), the locality (*pays*), the land; these are the cumulative passions which blend and fire the patriotism of France. You will hear not so often “beautiful France,” as the “beautiful land of France.” You will hear one Frenchman ask another “Of what *pays* are you?” In the Marseillaise itself—though not alas! in the English translation—the soldier fights to rid the *furrows* of the hated invader. The invaded region, despoiled, profaned, is “notre grande blessée, la terre de France.” The very apple trees, girdled and dying, have a personality; the villages are “assassinated;” the windowless houses are “blind.”

This love of the land, one finds it in France the basis not only of defense but of reconstruction. Mme. Moreau, President of the Vil-

\* Albert Demangeon: La Picardie.

lages Libérés, notable among the associations for reconstruction formed by French women, says in addressing her colleagues: "In this task we, women of the frontier, have the part Providence has given us. This work is woven with our lives and mingles itself with our memories, our affections, with the heavy responsibilities of our situation. It is not ours to assume it or not to assume it. It imposes itself. Who then will raise again the family home, restore our fields, our vines, replant for our little children the woods which our grandfathers have planted, if it is not we? The names of villages and the corners of farms, which in the Communiqués are only names, we have known since our infancy every stone and every spring of them—and all that we love there is gone. Whether we belong to the Marches of Lorraine with my compatriot, the blessed Joan of Arc, to the Nord, to the country of Soissons, to the Marne, or to the Ardennes, we have the honor to be of the chosen land, the land of the front, and I say

it proudly, we, we, too, belong to the Twentieth Corps.”\*

Again, listen to the plea of the Justice of the Peace of Combles, sent in 1917 to the American Red Cross. “Ladies and Gentlemen of Free America” he begins, “I have the honor to call to your attention one of the most unfortunate regions of France, devastated and destroyed by more than two years of war—the village of Combles, chief town of a Canton composed of twenty-one communes in the department of the Somme. . . . If a journey is made at the present time through these regions, so alive and so fertile before the war, but now so desolate, nothing is to be seen but a vast chalky plain, quite white and everywhere reduced to powder. The ground which had a fertile soil of one meter in depth, has been completely turned up and the shells and the machine guns have brought to the surface the subsoil of pebbly chalk. This soil, which is now mixed with all sorts of rub-

\* Report.

bish and scraps of shells, will take more than fifty years to recover its fertility.

“Shall I relate to you, ladies and gentlemen, the sufferings, the endurance, the courage and heroism displayed by the unfortunate inhabitants of Combles and of the communes of Hardecourt-aux-Bois, Guillemont, Ginchy, Maurepas, and later of Morval, Rancourt, Sailly-Sallisel (the first-mentioned places situated on the Front opposite the Anglo-French positions established at Maricourt), the courage displayed in the face of such misfortunes and destruction and in the midst of vexations and violence of all sorts to which they were subjected?

“Maricourt! a village ever to be remembered, which a very ancient tradition speaks of as consecrated to the Virgin, *curtis Mariæ* (Village of Marie). This village has, in fact, never been trodden under foot by the invading hordes, neither in 1870 nor in the present war!

“When the Bavarians and other Germans

boasted that by means of renewed attacks they would succeed in taking the village, the women of Combles replied proudly: ‘You will not take Maricourt, not even a brick of it!’ and the village and its trenches stood out against all the attacks of the Germans in 1914, 1915, 1916! Its defenders were intrepid and the place remained impregnable.

“William II and the Crown Prince themselves came to Combles, accompanied by Staff Officers of their allies, and pointed out to the latter the difficulty of taking the position.

“Numerous Bavarian regiments were used up in their fruitless attempts, renewed from month to month for more than two years, to take this village. The discouraged men remaining from these regiments were sent to other fronts. They were replaced by Prussian regiments who, more obstinate or better trained, wished to excel the Bavarians, but they in their turn were destroyed. Thousands of them lay in front of the Anglo-French trenches at Maricourt.

“During these alternate attacks and regular battles in which the villages of Guillemont, Ginchy, Maurepas, Hardecourt were under fire from the heavy guns, the population of Combles, continuously on the *qui vive*, was a prey to every kind of anguish.

“Many a time we hoped to see our victorious soldiers reach our town. We heard the French drums sounding the charge, we heard the reply of their artillery and their heavy fire, then the heavy guns hidden in the woods above Combles hurled their shells at our regiments which, in their eagerness, had drawn too close. Too frequently, in the middle of the night, when the troops had broken through the enemy and were rapidly advancing on Combles, violent storms occurred followed by torrential rain which soaked the hills and the valleys, and stopped dead the advance of our men who could thus no longer be seconded by their artillery. Then silence and darkness would reign again. For us, the hope of deliverance was once more lost, and we were happy

if on the following morning we did not see the arrival of twenty or thirty French or English soldiers, harassed and with torn uniforms covered with blood and mud and escorted by Boche soldiers who led them away, prisoners, down the High street of Combles.

“These unfortunate prisoners were absolutely forbidden to speak to us, but we said a sympathetic word to them in a low voice. The greater part of them did not look dejected or discouraged, but rather indignant at having to submit to such captivity, and a gleam of courage and hope was still to be seen in their eyes, like heroes whom Fortune had betrayed!

“Over the six kilometres which separated Maricourt and Hardecourt from Combles the same tragedies were frequently renewed during the darkest nights, when the Germans opened furious attacks to surprise first the advance posts and then the trenches of Maricourt. What struggles, what hecatombs by thousands! According to German officers,

there were heaps of corpses of soldiers and horses to the height of a man between the fronts of the two armies. More than thirty thousand of their soldiers were thrown pêle-mêle and buried in the quarries between Hardecourt-aux-Bois and Maricourt. Their wounded were continually passing through to the hospitals established at Combles. The tombs of soldiers and officers increased the size of the cemetery threefold. The bodies of superior officers were transported from Combles to Péronne, to be sent to their families in Germany.

“Our heroes, who have died for their country, and for the emancipation and liberty of nations, also sleep by thousands at Hardecourt and Carnoy, where the struggle was so obstinate, and on all this part of the banks of the Somme, which they have bathed with their blood, where they have left their bones, to arrest the vandals of Germany!

“But the day of our departure and of our



forced evacuation, was also the prelude to the destruction of Combles!

“On the 28th of June, 1916, after a bombardment which raged for five days and five nights, the inhabitants were obliged to leave their unfortunate town, abandoning to the cupidity of the enemy everything which we had been able during the previous two years to retain in our dwellings—everything we possessed in the way of furniture, bedding, clothing, silver, books, pictures, family heirlooms—in fact everything that was precious remaining to us. It was only on the following 25th of September that Combles was finally occupied by the Anglo-French troops who took possession of it after terrible struggles.

“Fifteen hundred wounded Germans were found in the vast subterranean quarters twenty meters in depth, the entrance to which was situated in the center of the town, and more than six hundred prisoners were at the same time captured in the borough which

had been surrounded on all sides by the Allied troops.

“The Germans retired to the north towards Sailly-Sallisel and continued the bombardment of what remained of Combles, in order to hinder the advance of the Anglo-French armies.

“The town being thus successively under the fire and crushed by the shells of both armies, was converted into a mass of ruins, to such an extent that it would be difficult to recognize the sites of its principal houses, its public monuments, the church—several centuries old—the town hall, schools, squares, and old streets.

“For more than two years, either at Combles or in the northern region to which we were evacuated, and where we were still under the German domination, I have personally encountered the same dangers, endured the same sufferings, and the most trying vexations after having lost practically all that I possessed and seen my family dispersed, two of

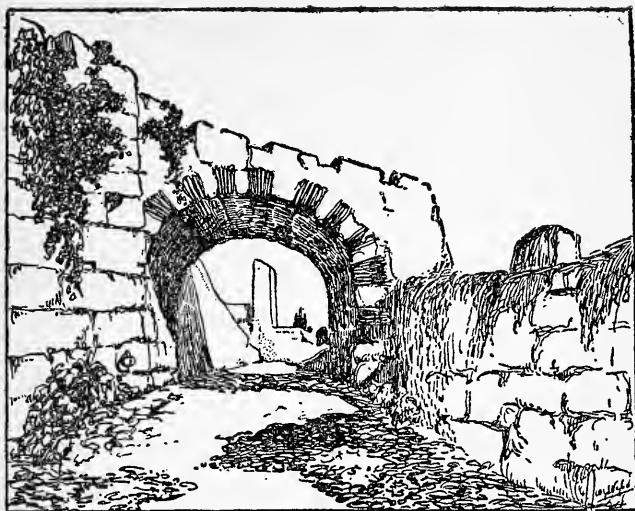
my children having been wounded and the third being at present on the battle front.

“I appeal therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, for your generous intervention in favor of our town of Combles and its communes which, by their long martyrdom and their courage, have well deserved universal sympathy.

“You will thus contribute, Ladies and Gentlemen of Free America, of the Great Sister Republic, to the renewal of our valiant rural population and to the re-establishment of Our France, with whom you are entering into the struggle for the triumph of justice, of the liberty of nations and of the future of humanity.”

Alas! the commune of Combles, even the impregnable “Village of Mary” fell to the invaders in the spring of 1918. But its appeal is typical of the touching confidence of France in her sister ally. In answering the spirit of such an appeal, America has builded even better than she knew. She has asked,

through her Red Cross, to be admitted into the very heart of France, into that place doubly sacred in France from the intrusions of strangers—the home. And she has been doubly welcomed. In the words of Mme. Eduard Fuster, who has given invaluable service in guiding the policies of the American Red Cross: “You have come here not only to help us win the war, but to share with us all our burdens, all our sufferings; those of the front and those of the trenches, and those also behind the lines. . . . All the victims of war have laid their problems before you, all our sorrows have found an echo in your hearts.”



*Old Fortifications at Antibes.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo.  
Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER II

### TO WIN THE WAR

**T**HE American Red Cross is, like the present American Army, young. Although the Geneva Convention, called in 1863, was signed by fourteen nations in 1864, America did not sign it until 1882, and it was only in 1905 that the volunteer organization styled the American Red Cross was established by

Act of Congress as the official relief organization of the United States. Its purpose as then defined is: "To continue and carry out a system of national and international relief in time of peace and to apply the same in mitigating the sufferings caused by pestilence, famine, fire, floods and other great national calamities and to devise and carry on measures for preventing the same."

But the Red Cross is not so young as the American Army in its intervention in France. Prior to our entering the war, it had already its representative in the field in the form of the American Relief Clearing House, through which contributions in money and in supplies were shipped and distributed for two years. The American public was already familiar with pleas on its behalf, such as that made by President Wilson in January, 1917: "Another winter closes around the great European struggle, and with the cold, there comes greater need among soldiers in the fighting line, and in the hospitals, and still more





*A War Orphan of Brittany.*



among the women and children in ruined homes or in exile."

Yet it remained for the declaration of war to develop the astounding resources which the conscience and the imagination of the American people placed at the disposal of the Red Cross. The preparation of the Army was not more swift nor more far sighted than that of its service of mercy. A war council of seven members, created May 10, 1917, placed the organization on a war basis. The Chairman of that Council brought to it a name renowned in the business world. The campaign drives of the Red Cross, resulting in the collecting of \$350,000,000, attest not only the generosity, but the confidence of the nation in the integrity and sagacity of the administration of those funds. The membership of the organization leapt into the millions; the American Red Cross became what the French were quick to call it—the expression of the heart of America toward France.

For it was not to our own army, but to the

needs of our Allies, particularly of France, that the initial service of our Red Cross was dedicated. To us, in America, it seemed the logical, the tangible thing to do, to send the Red Cross personnel as an advance guard, an earnest of the army that was to follow. The civilian activities of the Red Cross at home, the contributions, already large, which we had made to the relief of Belgium and of France through other agencies, had accustomed us to look upon civilian relief in a foreign country as natural.

Not so was our advent regarded by Europe. France welcomed us, but as something new, unheard of. Her response was enthusiastic in proportion to her wonder. Other allies had given of their treasure, and we must never forget, more largely than we, to the same cause; they had given what we had not yet had the opportunity to do, their millions of lives. But America brought for the first time in the history of the Red Cross, a war service in aid of civilians as well as of soldiers,—I

would say, for the first time in the history of nations. Private societies, such as the English Quakers as far back as the Franco-Prussian War of 1871, rendered a similar service to France; in France, on the advent of the Red Cross, they and many other foreign-born organizations were already engaged in civilian relief. The significance of the entry of the American Red Cross lay in the fact that it represented not a private agency, but the American Government. The President of the United States, as its president as well, spoke through it to the people of France. "Wherever these Red Cross men and women go," he said, "they are carrying the message that Americans cannot rest without seeking to relieve such suffering." The spirit with which they went to that service is equally illustrated in the charge given by the Chairman of the War Council to one of the first groups to cross the ocean: "Make the French glad that you have come."

Aside from the moral support which was

doubtless given by the actual presence of their new ally in their midst—to which, from the day of our advent until now, the French press and people give tribute—there were sound military reasons why the Red Cross should add civilian to battlefield relief. War, never confined to the actual field of combat, has always caused destruction of property, and loss of civilian life. But never before has war been organized, nation against nation, as was the war which Germany organized and launched against the whole world.

When the heroic Mayor of Noyon, that ancient city where Charlemagne was crowned, protested against the infractions of the terms of the Hague convention by its German conquerors in 1914, he was told: “We are not making the war solely against the French Army: we are making it against the whole of France; our aim is to ruin it, to weaken it by every means possible. You complain of being pillaged; well, we consider every store, every unoccupied house as belonging to us:

where there are legal occupants, we are disposed, by indulgence, not to take more than is necessary for the well-being of the German army. If we spare ever so little the civil population *of the war*, and do not compel them to undergo all its consequences, it is because we are not barbarians; such are our methods of war, the harder they are, the more inexorable, the shorter will be the war!"\*

It was the realization of this menace, driven home by the violation of Belgium, the sinking of merchantmen, the well-attested atrocities of Northern France, that arrayed the civilized world against the outlaw, Germany. The defense of civilization was being made over there, on the plains of Picardy, along the Chemin des Dames, in the forests of Ardennes, at Verdun.

"Whatever may be the character of the American Red Cross in time of peace," said the first Commissioner to France of the Amer-

\* Noyon pendant l'occupation allemande: Ernest Noël, in *La Revue Hebdomadaire*.

ican Red Cross, before the Anglo-American press on September 17, 1917, "to-day in the midst of this catastrophe, its supreme function is to aid in every way possible the winning of the war. It would be a pitiable and mistaken conception to regard it from the point of view of a charity at a moment like this. For three years our Allies have taken upon themselves our part in the battle. They have carried all the burden of anguish, they have suffered all the wounds, they have died for our sakes. It is inevitable that some time must yet elapse before our troops can play their part seriously in the trenches. Meantime, the American organizations should claim it not only as a privilege, but as a strict obligation, to do all that is in their power to aid the valiant nations to whom our people are so deeply indebted."



*Noyon, in April 1917.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo.  
Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER III

### THE FIELD OF OPPORTUNITY

**T**HE American Red Cross Commission arrived in France in June, 1917. It consisted of eighteen members, each contributing some special part toward the great end in view, the winning of the war. Battlefield relief, it was understood, would be effected immediately under the supervision of the War Department, but "civilian relief will present a field of increasing opportunity

in which the Red Cross organization is especially adapted to serve."

In the devastated area, which bounds the horizon of the present narrative, the field was indeed ample, and the opportunity ripe. One cannot picture wholesale destruction. Not even an eye witness of it, mile after mile, and village after village, can have the concept of it which would be his were the cottage razed, the village decimated, the region ruined, the country fought for, his own. Not only so, but that part of Northern France overtaken by perfidy in 1914, was, historically, the home of France. The modern names of the departments involved: the Nord and the Ardennes, completely swallowed up, the Pas-de-Calais, the Somme, the Aisne, the Oise, the Meuse, the Meurthe and Moselle, and the frontier of the Vosges, scenes for four years of gigantic struggle,—these revolutionary appellations lose completely their savour of antiquity. But let us mention the provinces of Artois, of Picardy, of Champagne, of Lor-



raine, of the Ile de France, whence came the very name of the French nation, and there move before our eyes like a pageant the medieval powers, the spiritual dominions, the literary glory which have made the France of to-day. One of our soldiers, stationed near Domremy, was asked by a Frenchman, who was showing him about, if he knew Joan of Arc. "Sure," was the response, "I went to school with her." "And when was that?" inquired the astonished Frenchman. "In 1429," he replied. Whether many of our privates, like this one, have gone to school with French history or not, the children of France have done so generation by generation. Even a geography is not complete without its political account of the soil. Soissons, Reims, the Marches of Lorraine, the Santerre of Picardy, now laid in ruins, yet stand as representatives of the ideals of a race.

Figures convey their picture of economic destruction. The devastated area, in its entirety, covered—and covers at the present

moment—six thousand square miles of France. It comprised that area most thickly populated, richest in manufactures, and richest in agriculture. One quarter of the wheat crop was formerly raised in it. Eighty-seven per cent of the beets from which France derived her sugar came from it. 2,000,000 people had made in it their homes. In it were the deposits of iron, of potash and of coal, greedily coveted by Germany; so much so, that the possession of them became that military necessity which turned into a scrap of paper the neutrality of Belgium and of Luxembourg.

This area, varying with the fortune of battles, consisted, in June, 1917, of the territory still in the hands of the Germans, of the actual front, and of the territory from which the Germans had been driven out. The former was being cared for, as well as it could be in captivity, by the Dutch and Spanish delegates who took over the operation of our Belgian Relief Commission on our entry into the war. The front, at least fifteen miles in

depth at any given point, was reserved for military operations. Back of this front were situated the "régions libérées," of civilian relief. They extended in a broad swathe a hundred miles long by thirty wide, up the valley of the Marne. They paralleled the road to Verdun. They lay in a fringe along the northern border of the frontier provinces of the Meurthe and Moselle and the Vosges. Most recently uncovered, and hence offering the clearest opportunity, they comprised the 1580 square miles of the Somme, the Aisne and the Oise cleared of the Germans in the "Great Retreat" of March, 1917. It was to this area that the American Red Cross first turned its attention. A preliminary survey was made.

Contrast may help to picture what the Commission saw. In a certain classic on agriculture,\* may be found this description of the regions through which the Commissioners passed. "They comprise those orchard

Albert Demangeon: *La Picardie*.

lands, gardens and vineyards picturesquely mingling with, or bordering a field of wheat, a patch of vegetables, a bit of clover, a cluster of vines, often tilled by the spade, by a race of petty farmers. The division of the soil is pushed to the extent that the trees of the one owner overhang the property of the other; beneath the tangle of apple trees, of pears, of peaches, of apricots, of plums, of cherries and of nuts oftentimes trellised, are hidden a thousand varied crops which succeed one another without lapse; here the asparagus and the grapes of Laon; there the artichokes and the string beans of Noyon, everywhere, as far as Clermont, all the lucrative products of intensive culture, which have given to the valley of Thèrain between Clermont and Creil the name of the "Vale of Gold" (Vallée Dorée). Nothing can equal the charm of those sunny and verdant slopes, at the same time orchards and gardens, their roads deep rutted by the coming and going of the laborers' heavy boots. This aspect of nature fresh

and picturesque, this culture minute and varied, separates us widely from those plains of immense and monotonous toil where the eye loses itself at the horizon above the fields of grain."

A writer of greater power passed this way in the summer of 1917. "In Egypt, behind the quarries on the Nile, there is a place as desolate where nothing living moves. But this is France—dear, rich, green *France*—this scorched and arid desert, with the cruel gaping wound torn in her fair side. This is France—and it is full summertime! Weeds and poppies and grasses, poppies and grasses and weeds, trenches and broken wagon wheels, a nightmare of ugly things. And here a pitiful group of crosses—and there another, tens of them, hundreds of them, close to the road. . . .

"Come now and look from this mount.

"A livid sky—a forest of blackened stumps and poles and the interminable stretch of weeds—nothing but this as far as the eye can see.

“Here you should count three hundred villages, with each a little church.

“Villages?—Churches?—not even heaps of stones remain to mark their sepulchres.

“Gone—blotted out.”\*

Yet this is not the whole picture. There are intermediate tones. Not only were there such communes, like Combles, caught and crushed between opposing artillery, there were the greater number too quickly taken by the Germans to have suffered bombardment. Each, except for certain centers of refuge, suffered the same fate, to be held for a varying period, to be depopulated by successive deportations, to be sacked and finally to be systematically destroyed.

“The Germans, when they retreated in March, 1917, certainly believed that they had thrown insurmountable difficulties in our path. They left behind them smashed bridges and roads ripped up by tremendous explosions, which sometimes, as in Licourt, caused craters

\* Elinor Glyn: *Destruction*. Duckworth & Co., London.





*A House in Noyon.*

*Après le Recul Allemand, Mars 1917. Noyon, Guiscard, Ham: Armand Guéritte. Vernant & Dolle, Imprimeurs, Paris.*



fifty feet across and fifty feet deep. Some regions were flooded. Trees cut down across the highways were to be an obstacle to immediate pursuit. And far behind the fighting lines, the enemy placed fields of barbed wire. Every bit of ground which had any strategic importance was fortified, trenched and camouflaged for the eventual battles and for a prolonged resistance."

"They slyly prepared other ambushes which were to add to the effect of the obstacles in the path of the French troops. Their massing of the entire civil population which was not sent back to Germany, all the useless mouths, into certain villages which were, relatively speaking, spared, was a military maneuver whose true purpose was not intuitively recognized by our incurable and candid generosity. We regarded it for a moment as a sort of manifestation of German pity! But it was all brutally clear when, immediately after the retreat, in the terrible confusion of battle, we had to feed those home-coming French

people suffering unimaginable distress. Little towns whose normal population was from three to five hundred saw these figures multiplied by five; at Roye more than six thousand people were without food; at Chauny the frightened population at first received our troops, whose uniform they did not recognize, with stupor; at Ham it was again the army which had to provide improvised supplies. There was no means of communication; there was nothing on the spot, the Germans having taken everything away; the regions which had been spared were in total isolation in the midst of a desert, where nothing disturbed the horrible solitude except the whirl of neighboring battles.”\*

\* *Le Temps*, Jan. 6, 1918.



*Notre Dame, From St. Julien-le-Pauvre.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo. Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PLAN: ORGANIZATION

SUCH was the immediate field of opportunity presented to the American Red Cross. Its needs were patent. Housing was necessary, food was necessary, the revival of agriculture and of industries was necessary. What few doctors were left in the region had been deported by the Germans; even medicines had been packed in the great vans that bore every mobile article of value away. Doc-

tors were necessary for the children and the old people insufficiently nourished and abnormally depressed. The curés had shared the fate of the doctors. Spiritual and moral encouragement, the restoration of normal life—these were the things most necessary of all.

But, as has been said, the American Red Cross did not have its chosen field to itself. Its first problem of organization was to determine its relation to the many agencies already operating in the devastated area, some of them since the beginning of the war. They grouped themselves in three classes: governmental, military, and private. There was no question of the place of the American Red Cross in regard to the two former. It came to France by invitation from the French Government; it would work in the army zone only by consent of the armies of occupation. Its duty was to subordinate its purpose to that of the government and of the army, and to place its resources at their disposal. But the third

group, that of private agencies, presented matter for careful study.

The American societies, up to the time of the arrival of the American Red Cross, had accomplished their work for the French army and for French civilians under the authorization of the French Government. In fact, they were incorporated in the Service de Santé of the French Army. What was to be the relation between these groups, already established, and the American Red Cross? The status of the American Relief Clearing House, the forerunner and official representative of the Red Cross in France, was a determining factor in the policy finally adopted.

This was "an organization which came into existence during the early months of the war, for the purpose of relieving the confusion into which relief supplies coming from America had been thrown, and of expediting their distribution to those in need. It was found that without some organization devoted especially to these purposes, the relief of which the suf-

ferers were in such urgent need, was subjected to great delay in reaching them; that it was frequently misdirected through lack of proper information on the part of the senders; that through ignorance of the formalities of French ports, supplies were frequently denied entry altogether; and that quite as often for various reasons many valuable gifts were lost.

“The purpose of the organization is therefore to centralize and control as far as possible at Paris the receipt of all relief from America destined for France and her Allies, as the most convenient point for distribution:

“To investigate the needs of all localities, to keep the New York office informed as to the requirements of different districts and by constant advice to prevent overlapping and duplication.

“To clear at all points of entry all goods consigned from America.

“To forward to destination, without undue delay, all goods received and, through the

facilities offered by the French Government, to expedite the transshipment of goods cleared from Port of Entry and to require receipts from consignees at point of final destination.

“To secure from the French authorities free transportation both by sea and by rail in France of all goods destined for relief, and, therefore, to minimize the expenses incident to the work of all relief societies co-operating with the Clearing House.

“To distribute to best advantage, according to our information as to actual present needs, any relief that may be entrusted to the discretion of the Clearing House for this purpose; and to keep and render strict account of the same.

“The functions of the Clearing House briefly are:

“1. To forward to destination all relief supplies sent through it consigned to particular societies;

“2. To receive and distribute relief supplies where most needed;

“3. To receive money and to purchase supplies either with or without definite instructions as to distribution;

“4. To provide these facilities free of all expense to the donors.”\*

The American Red Cross automatically absorbed the American Relief Clearing House and its functions. Its Director General became the Director General of the Red Cross, and a number of its prominent officers took positions of responsibility in the new organization. At the same time, the policy of the Red Cross toward all the organizations, French, American or British, subsidized to any degree by the Clearing House underwent a radical change. Whereas the Clearing House had assumed the responsibility of forwarding supplies and money to particular destinations, the Red Cross hastened to state that it considered its function to be the impartial distribution at its discretion of all supplies sent from America to the relief of

\* Report.



France. The reasons for this change were two-fold. First, there was great inequality of distribution to the different organizations dependent on the Clearing House, varying with the size of the receiving society, and the effectiveness of its propaganda, rather than with the actual needs of the localities served. Second, and more vital, there was the cutting down of transportation facilities from America, incident to our active participation in the war.

At first only nine hundred tons per month were allowed to the American Red Cross for all its activities, military as well as civilian, on United States transports, and the maximum reached at any time by allowance was four thousand tons. Although this amount was increased by space paid for whenever possible on regular merchantmen, the average shipment per month of Red Cross supplies from America during the war, stands at about the latter figure, four thousand tons. Not only was the Red Cross thus made account-

able to the home government for the amount of its shipments. It had scrupulous obligations to the French Government, which, in the midst of its heavy transportation of men and supplies for actual fighting, gave free transportation in the interior to the supplies and the personnel of the American Red Cross as it had done to those of the Clearing House.

Despite this limited tonnage, and the limited railroad transportation, the American Red Cross was in duty bound to greatly increase the volume of its output over that of the Clearing House. It must go into the market to buy. But here again were restrictions; the Army, French, British or American, had always the precedence. Thus it came about that supplies and their proper distribution assumed such importance as to become the crux of the whole administrative problem of civilian relief.

Naturally, readjustment on the new basis took time, and designated shipments were honored as such until an agreement could be

reached. But it was the feeling of the American Red Cross that the ideal to be aimed at was the absorption rather than the affiliation of American relief agencies. They had as a guide in this policy, the centralized organization of our Belgian Relief Commission, which had worked on the German side of the lines in the identical territory into which the Red Cross was to enter. They had in mind the pooling of all resources, as was done in the United States itself. They had found the French *œuvres* (societies), excellent in themselves, working in detachment, the one from the other. "Our French Red Cross itself is represented by three organizations which have been associated in a common committee only since the beginning of the war,"\* wrote M. Firmin Roz in comparing it with the American Red Cross. What better service could the Department of Civilian Relief give to French societies having the same aim as itself than a working example of centralized organization?

\* In *La Revue Hebdomadaire*.

All American relief agencies for civilians were, therefore, invited to confer informally, with the tentative idea of becoming integral parts of the American Red Cross.

This plan did not meet with success. It was perhaps undesirable that it should have done so. The other societies had their chapters, their clubs, their clientèle at home, their affiliations with the French Government abroad. Their founders had been pioneers during our neutrality, giving, many of them, of their private resources, as an expression of their passionate attachment to the cause of France. Most of their leaders were women of influence and of initiative. Otherwise, in the midst of the difficulties which confronted them, their organizations would never have been born. They had succeeded, and by their success held what the American Red Cross had yet to win, the confidence of the French Government. They felt, with justice, that they had much to offer the Red Cross in the way of resources and of experience.

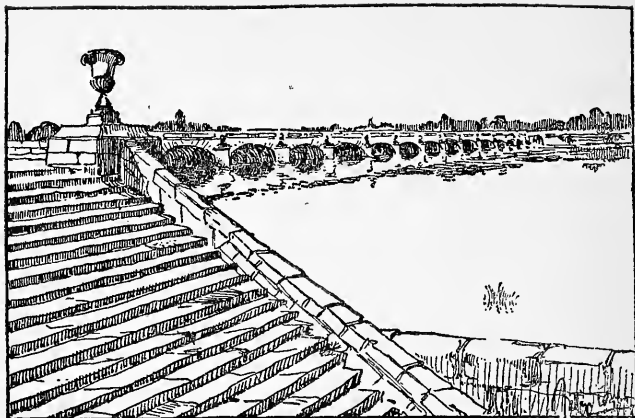
All this they did offer, but they were unwilling to give up their identity.

A compromise was therefore effected. In the field of civilian relief, for instance, one society, that of the American Friends—a very large group—became a department under the Red Cross, but without losing its name. Another, the Smith College Relief Unit, retained both its name and its independent financial support, but worked as a direct agent of the Red Cross. A third, the Secours Anglo-Américain at Amiens, lost both its name and its outside support, its personnel becoming Red Cross workers. Others, such as the American Fund for French Wounded, and later the American Committee for Devastated France, were loosely affiliated, retaining their complete independence, receiving a monthly stipend, coöperating in transportation, supplies and personnel. With two societies, the American Fund for French Wounded and the Friends, the Red Cross made special arrangements as to designated shipments.

In general, however, the policy of the American Red Cross crystallized into that of cooperation with existing societies, whether American, French, Canadian or British. But, as to the two latter, it is only fair to state that the relations of the American Red Cross with them are best described as neighborly, both parties, with scrupulous Anglo-Saxon independence, returning all favors received. Toward all other agencies, in the words of one of the organizers of relief in the devastated area, the Red Cross became, not an œuvre itself, but the "Mother of Œuvres." "We have looked," he writes, "on the liberated regions of France as an experimental field in which to create a personnel and a programme for the larger piece of work, when all of the north of France is disengaged. To this end we have used, as our agents, all possible existing relief organizations already in the field. We have endeavored to federate these organizations in order to deal with them more simply, and to plan for the more im-

portant demands which will come to us from them."

In brief, the policy of the American Red Cross in France has been subordination, coordination, cooperation; subordination to the French Government, the French and allied armies, subordination always to the needs of our own army; coordination and cooperation with all existing agencies,—a policy by no means easy to attain.



*Bridge at Tours.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo, Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER V

### THE PLAN: ADMINISTRATION

HAVING determined its broad lines of policy, the American Red Cross created the administrative machinery to carry them out. Its main office was located in Paris, the center of government, and of every considerable agency of relief. At its head stood the Commissioner for France. Under him, military and civilian affairs were sharply divided into two departments. The administrator of the latter was styled the Director of Civilian



Relief. So far as the liberated regions were concerned, this department was further subdivided into three bureaus: The Children's Bureau, occupied primarily with matters of public health as affecting the future citizens of France; the Bureau of Reconstruction, dealing with the repair of damaged houses and architectural planning, and the Bureau of Relief and Economic Rehabilitation.

Fortunately for the work of the Department, there were available for its personnel at this time a number of former delegates of the Belgian Relief Commission, who could no longer work in Belgium and France owing to our having become belligerents in the war. They brought to the Department not only valuable training in what might be called wholesale economic relief, but also in some instances first-hand acquaintance with the area most recently liberated in Northern France. The plan of relief adopted was largely influenced by them, being a modification of that previously worked out by this

**Commission.** It consisted of the controlling office in Paris, quickly amalgamated into the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Relief, and field delegates sent out from it to definitely assigned areas. To make the plan of operation clear, it will be better to consider this method as operative from September 1, 1917, to March 21, 1918. On this latter date occurred the last German offensive which swept again into chaos the "région libérée."

It was evident that material relief was the thing to be sent first into that stricken country. There was need of tons of clothing, of shoes, of furniture, particularly beds and bedding, of household utensils, agricultural implements, stoves, soap and food. Free transportation by rail had been accorded. It remained to divide the four invaded departments (the Oise, the Aisne, the Somme and the Pas-de-Calais) into districts centering about warehouses which should distribute these supplies. Haste was important; summer was turning into autumn, autumn into





*The Son of a Soldier, Paris.*

winter—such a winter as the invaded territories had never seen. For it must be borne in mind that even under the German occupation, there had remained to the unfortunate inhabitants their homes, their furniture, their farms. Whereas the autumn of 1917 found them free and reunited to their country, on the other hand, scarcely a family had escaped its quota of members sent into slavery, and only a small proportion retained their roofs above their heads.

With the kindly cooperation of préfets, mayors and army officers, the sites of the warehouses in the north were chosen and buildings secured at Amiens, Ham, Nesle (Somme), Noyon (Oise) and Soissons (Aisne). The latter, the nearest point from the great central warehouse at Paris, was distant sixty-five miles; Amiens, eighty-one miles away, was the farthest north, but Ham was thirty-six miles from Amiens, through which owing to the St. Quentin salient, all freight to it had to be shipped. Naturally these sites were

selected for two reasons; their accessibility, and their importance to the districts to be served by them. The capacity of these warehouses gives some idea of the amount of freight handled: Amiens (undestroyed) forty carloads, Ham, five carloads, Nesle, five carloads, Noyon, twelve carloads, and Soissons, three carloads. But the speed of operation varied in these warehouses with the difficulties of rail and motor transport. Military maneuvers always took precedence over civilian freight, even to the extent of temporary shortage in civilian food. Despite the danger from bombing, and the always possible German advance, the accumulation of supplies in the warehouses, therefore, seemed advisable. The value of the goods so stored against emergencies in March, 1918, is interesting in this connection: Amiens, Fr. 300,000; Ham, 197,568.10; Nesle, 137,000; Noyon, 208,834, and Soissons, 334,947.94.

Yet the warehouses emptied themselves with astonishing rapidity. Attached to each

was a head warehouse man and a transport service of from one to five trucks, with drivers, and a passenger Ford. Under the Red Cross direction worked a force of men usually assigned by the French Army for unloading and reloading goods. The value of this transport service alone in a zone where there were practically no private conveyances, where every automobile had to be militarized, and where gasoline could be obtained only on an army order and then at a cost of six francs a litre, can hardly be overestimated. Next to the relief supplies themselves, transportation was the most essential service rendered by the Red Cross in the *régions dévastées*.

Yet the duties of the four delegates to whom the warehouses and their staffs were assigned comprised much more than the mere distribution of relief. The instructions from the central office to the delegate were as follows:

1. To reside in his district.
2. To establish friendly relations with all officials, civil and military, in his district.

3. To study and report upon means of communication and transportation.

4. To study and report upon:

(a) The amount of destruction caused by the war.

(b) The number of civilians who are back and the rapidity with which they are returning.

(c) The condition of those who are back and how they live and what they do.

(d) Organization and range of all relief machinery in the field, including that of the government.

5. To establish friendly relations with other organizations and through them aid the civil population in such ways as seem desirable and feasible.

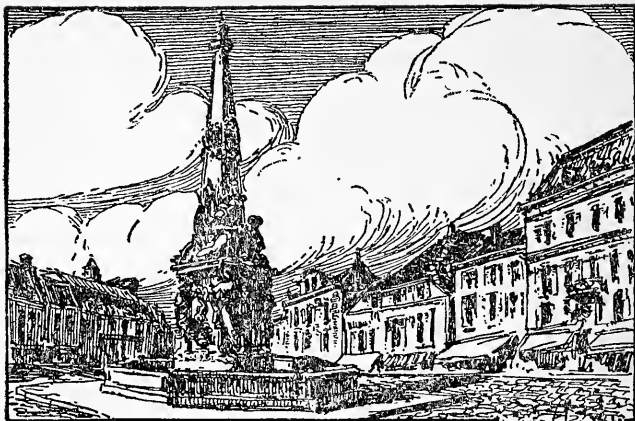
6. To have general oversight of the warehouse in his district and cooperate with the warehouse department.

In other words, as the head of the Bureau wrote six months later: "From the start we have tried to impress upon the *œuvres* the



American Red Cross point-of-view that our effort is not intended as simple charity, but as a direct contribution to the rehabilitation of the invaded departments of France; that we do not intend to assume any part of the normal burden of poor relief in these departments; that our help is intended to set war-sufferers on their feet and to make them self-respecting, independent and productive citizens; that it is important for the future as well as for the present that beneficiaries of American Red Cross aid should know that it is America which is helping them—the same America which is their militant Ally.”

It will be seen that a delegate was, in his way, an ambassador from America to his province, and in need of special qualifications of tact, of sympathy, of decision. It is the delegates, not only in the devastated area, but in any department, who have made the living history of the civilian relief of the American Red Cross in France.



*Public Fountain at Noyon.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo.  
Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PLAN: COOPERATION

THE first delegate to reach his field was, naturally, the delegate assigned to the district most accessible, that radiating from Noyon, in the Oise. He established himself there in the first week of September, 1917. There were already many agencies which had preceded him, since this area had been rapidly cleared in March, and was well behind the lines. These agencies were those of the Third

French Army, those of the Government, represented by the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Prefecture of the Department, and private societies. Of these latter, one was American and six were French. Between the private societies and the Government, however, there were connecting links, through the Comité du Secours National, attached to the Ministry of the Interior, which federalized and subsidized French activities of relief, both public and private; and, more directly, for all societies, through a special sous-préfet representing the Ministry, and appointed as liaison officer in each department of the invaded territory between the French Army, the relief organizations and the Government. After all, it was the Army, reaching up through the Ministry of War, which governed this territory by martial law, and it was the Army which assigned to each agency its sector of relief. At the head of this civilian service for the Third Army was Captain Pal-

lain, stationed at Noyon. It will be seen that the stage was well set for the operation of Red Cross policy.

In a book of this scope, it would be both impossible and inappropriate to enter upon a description of the intricate yet fascinating schemes of relief worked out between the various departments of the French Government, the various corps of the French Army, the various prefectures, and the *œuvres*, in the devastated area. Yet it would be equally impossible to understand the course of the American Red Cross in any given district without some grasp of the main principles which underlay all the variations, and defined the limits within which it was free to operate. It is only fair to state that the French, masterly in their strategy of war, have been equally masterly in their conception of organized relief. And if we, in our American impatience, have sometimes chafed at the "red tape" of this organization, it is perhaps only because, drained of their

resources by the demands of military campaigns, whose thunders often shook the fields reclaimed, the French Army and the French Government were unable to carry out their ideals. Four years of stupendous warfare had tested not only the methods, but the spiritual and material capital of the French nation. The greatest struggle, as all the world knows now, was yet to be made, in the campaigns of 1918. If, therefore, the American Red Cross has made a contribution of value to France in this struggle, it is not so much in the domain of organization as it is in that of resources, both of personnel and of supplies, which enabled existing organizations to perform their work.

The practical scheme of reconstruction put in operation by the Third French Army was in accordance with the principles laid down by General Lyautey for a friendly army of occupation in a ravaged territory. It was placed in charge of a man of large affairs, Captain Pallain being the son of the President of

the Bank of France. It comprised (1) food supply, (2) actual rebuilding, (3) plowing, seeding, and supplying of farm animals, (4) sanitation. In short, while in the midst of an active campaign, it set itself to repair what the Germans had destroyed.

Put in another way, it supplied transport, labor, and the functions of local government. Sectors containing each an engineer, a physician, and an agricultural expert were given charge of stated areas. Labor was supplied immediately back of the lines by soldiers *en repos*, by Moroccans or Annamites whose red turbans or conical hats lent a curious oriental color to the dun landscape, or, further back, by hundreds of German prisoners. By autumn, in the region of Noyon, twelve hundred hectares or three thousand acres, had been plowed and planted. In all, in the region occupied by the Third Army, four thousand five hundred houses were repaired and five hundred built.

The same care of civilians was taken on the

British side of the lines. It was a military necessity, an offset to the war which Germany made upon civilians. The German Army had had its sectors also, of destruction and not of construction. To them were attached skilled mechanics who knew the essential parts of agricultural machinery, and removed the same part from each machine in their line of retreat. There were expert foresters who calculated to a nicety the girdling of fruit trees. There were chemists, who gauged the charges of explosives, and poisoned the wells. The field of this economic combat of nations was the richest of wheat lands,—and food would win the war. It followed that the allied armies of occupation must organize their civilian sectors for salvage in this new form of war.

But as the allied armies advanced their trenches, the land behind them became safer for civilians. The departmental government and the Ministry of the Interior took over more and more of its duties from the Army.

For example, a daily stipend was allotted by the Government to any family which had suffered loss of property or of wage earners. This was calculated to cover the bare cost of food, which was distributed by the departmental machinery. Depots were established of the most essential articles of furniture, which were given out through the mayors of communes. Each allotment bore a stated value, and this was to be deducted from a post-war settlement of damages to be paid by the Government. Cooperative grocery stores were also established, and, under the Department of Agriculture, associations of farmers who clubbed together to avail themselves of government tractors and government labor in the plowing of their land. Most important of all, the Government made, transported and allocated temporary shacks for the housing of the civilian population, the labor for the putting up of which was furnished largely by the Army. In all of this period of transition from military to civil government, the special



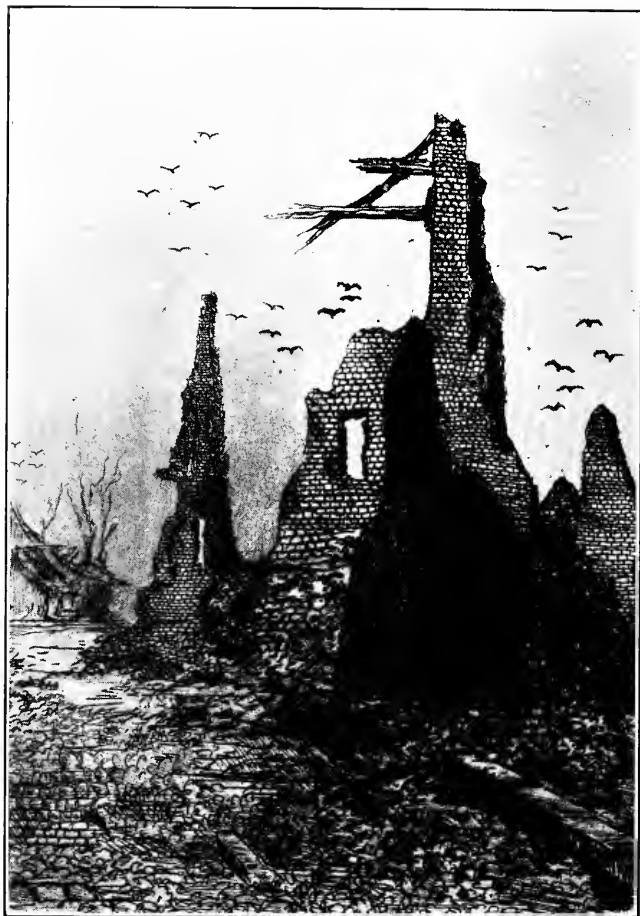
sous-préfet already mentioned was the connecting link between them.

One might question the need of private relief in a field so carefully covered by government agencies, were it not that the Government welcomed and made a place for them in its staggering task. It was not the Government, but the Chamber of Commerce of Dunkerque which stored there in anticipation of the allied advance, the first supplies of food rushed to the civilians of the liberated regions. In the eastern zone, it was the Secours d'Urgence that performed a like service. Warerooms were assigned to various societies in Paris, and a transport service placed at their disposal by the Army. The very names of the French œuvres are indicative of the emergency which created them and of the hold they have on the sympathy of the public which supports them. There are, for instance, the Abri (Shelter), the Bon Gîte (Good Lodging), the Armoire Lorraine (Wardrobe of Lorraine), the Renaissance des

Foyers (the Rebirth of the Homes), the Village Reconstitué (the Village Rebuilt), the Aisne Dévastée (the Devastated Aisne), the Secours d'Urgence (Emergency Relief). At the head of them all, in point of age and of prestige, are the Secours aux Blessés Militaires, the Union des Femmes de France and the Association des Dames de France, the three societies which make up the French Red Cross. All loosely federated under a liaison officer between the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Interior, it remained for these societies to work out their individual cooperation in accordance with the kind of help with which the one could supplement the other.

Take, for instance, the history of one of the French societies represented in the district assigned to the Red Cross delegate in the Oise, that known as the Comité de Babœuf. The village of Babœuf was destroyed by the Germans, and with it, the Château belonging to its chief councilor. His wife had a friend





*Ruins of Contalmaison, Somme.*

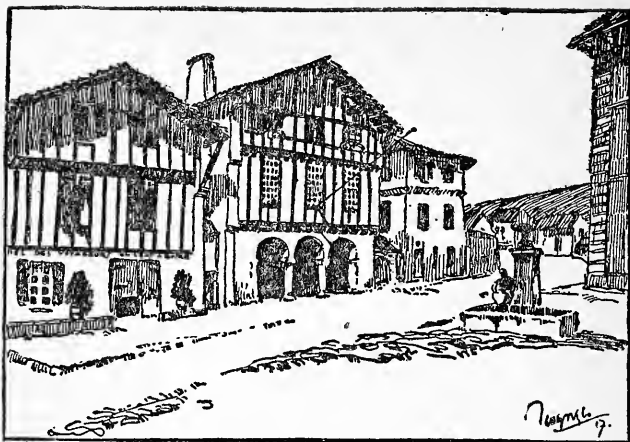
in Paris, a member of the Secours aux Blessés Militaires of the French Red Cross. She interested her in Babœuf. This was the beginning of the small œuvre which was later taken under the patronage of the Secours aux Blessés Militaires. Its plan of operation was simple. The first report reads: "Some nurses of the S. S. B. M. came to Babœuf in May, 1917, *to be the bond of union between the societies of mercy at a distance and the unfortunate populations.*" In the beginning, lacking means of transport, the establishment at Babœuf could act only in a very limited sector. Colonel Barry, of the British Red Cross, then placed at their disposal a small truck and a driver. From this beginning, their dependent villages grew. Their furniture was donated to them for distribution by the Bon Gîte from its central reservoir in Paris. Twelve other societies, representing five nationalities and three religious faiths—Protestant, Hebrew and Catholic—cooperated with them, some giving clothing, others

cloth, and others farm animals. Last, but not least, the Comité hired a gang of workmen and, with the help of the Army, repaired its villages.

With such a spirit of cooperation already abroad, it was easy for the delegate of the American Red Cross to make himself welcome. He represented, in their eyes, one more cooperating agency. But there was this difference between the American Red Cross and all other societies in the field. It was its purpose to cooperate impartially with all. Not only so, but in an unofficial capacity to influence the methods employed in the giving of relief, by selecting the agencies which should be the distributors of its supplies. In every case, the watchword was passed on from headquarters to avoid giving as a charity, to remember that the ultimate consumer was a self-respecting citizen, rendered temporarily helpless, but only temporarily, by the misfortunes of war. Even though the inhabitants left in the invaded regions were, for the

most part, women, old people and children, they came of a hardy race inured to toil, accustomed for hundreds of years to the wastage of contending armies. In nearly every case they had rescued their savings, those peasant savings which, as all the world knows, are the "long stocking" of the wealth of France.

The economic effort of the French Government was in accord with this Red Cross policy of helping the unfortunates to help themselves. And in the devastated regions the delegates of the Red Cross had also a valuable precedent in their favor. The Belgian Relief Commission, operating in the same territory behind the German lines, had made it a rule to sell for a nominal sum rather than to give outright. The smallest peasant understood and approved a plan which saved him from humiliation. It was recognized as the American way.



*Municipal Offices at Urrugne.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo.  
Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER VII

### COOPERATION IN PRACTICE

COOPERATION is a large word on paper, and looms larger in practice. Applied to the district manned by the American Red Cross delegate, it represented over 2000 square miles of territory and approximately 150,000 souls. The means at his command were (1) a warehouse, yet to be chosen and stocked, (2) a Ford passenger car, and later, a camionette, (3) a warehouse man, and later,



together with the camionette, a secretary, and a chauffeur. Noyon, his base of operations, was at the time of his advent, and up to the time of the armistice, the railhead on the main line from Paris to St. Quentin. Fifteen miles back, at Compiègne, were the grand headquarters of the French Army; from fifteen to twenty-five miles away in a sweeping semi-circle to the north and to the east extended the front line. Noyon figured in the plan of Germany as the gate on the direct road to Paris; conversely, it was to the French their gateway for troops, supplies and ammunition going up into the Somme. Camions in hundreds and thousands, cavalry, batteries of seventy-fives, steady marching infantry, blue devils, convoys of donkeys used to carry ammunition under fire, flocks of sheep, the whizzing cars of officers,—all passed like a pageant through Noyon. Nor were the sounds of combat absent. German aeroplanes, well aware of the activities centering in their former stronghold, visited it nearly every day. Bombs

were dropped, trains were wrecked, and the bullets of air battles, taking place almost out of sight in the blue sky above, came dropping down in the city streets.

Naturally, civilian affairs took secondary place in the matter of transport. Yet the army in the midst of its campaign set aside an efficient camion service from Noyon to carry civilian supplies. In this way, Noyon was the center of civilian as well as of military activity for the neighborhood, and all the relief agencies radiated from it. These latter dotted the ruined countryside at irregular intervals, from Golancourt in the Somme, to Senlis, the southernmost point of German devastations in the Oise, taking in, on the east, a section only five miles from the front line trenches at Villequier-Aumont, in the Aisne. At Golancourt was located a Friends' Unit, composed of both British and American workers; at Guiscard, a distributing station of the Renaissance des Foyers, at Babœuf, twelve miles west of Noyon, the Comité already men-

tioned, at Ribécourt, Lassigny and Noyon itself advance posts of the Village Reconstitué, at Chiry-Ourscamp the nurses of the Villages Libérés, and at Villequier-Aumont, nearest of all to the lines, an American women's unit, the Philadelphia Committee of the Pennsylvania Emergency Aid. All, it will be noted, had located their main posts of relief in the villages. All were bending their energies to the revival of agriculture in this, the richest agricultural area of France. The colony at Golancourt, twelve strong, was engaged in actual plowing, planting and restocking of farms; the Philadelphia Committee with a personnel averaging the same number, charged itself with the rehabilitation and reconstruction of five villages, including the building, equipping and teaching of two schools; the French societies with a smaller personnel and practically no transportation, worked a larger area, giving rather emergent relief.

This personnel consisted of visiting nurses,

settled, two by two, in their districts. In addition, the Villages Libérés had a physician. Yet this does not convey to an American an exact idea of the type of work accomplished. In the first place, France has no trained nurses, in the same sense that we have in America. Most of the nurses, whether belonging to the Secours aux Blessés Militaires, to the Femmes de France, or to the Dames de France, are ladies of social standing, of intelligence and of unselfish devotion, who volunteer in this service. Their rôle in the devastated area would correspond more to that of Sisters of Charity with us. As in the case of the Babœuf Comité, they were primarily distributing agents of societies at a distance. Their barracks contained besides dispensaries, dormitories for the shelterless returning refugees. They were oases of moral and social inspiration in their communities. These societies naturally became the largest distributors of American Red Cross supplies. Take, for instance, the post at Lassigny.

For two years and a half, Lassigny, situated on the heights above Noyon, had been swept by the cross fire of two opposing armies. The gently-rounded slopes about it, originally covered with copses, lie denuded, scarred with intricate, deep-gashed trenches, bristled by occasional trees, skeletons of the once lovely woods, from which even the bark is stripped bare. In Lassigny, so total had been the destruction of its houses that in May 1917 only two of its nine hundred inhabitants were back. Yet the poor remnant of its population continued to increase, existing in cellars, until by December one hundred and seventy had returned. Barracks, given by the Government, were erected by the Army. Conspicuous among them was the blue-painted headquarters of the Village Reconstitué, set at the crossroad. Here two courageous nurses of the Union des Femmes de France distributed the succor provided by their subsidizing agencies. Two cows furnished milk, which was given to undernourished children; a

vegetable garden was planted, hens and rabbits for the restocking of farms were raised. With the help of one sewing machine, the revival of industry began. A workroom for all the women within walking distance of Lassigny was established.

The opening of workrooms was one of the functions of the French societies, notably of the Femmes de France, most helpful to the morale of the devastated areas. No one was quicker than the French themselves to see the danger of pauperizing the unfortunate peasants. A regular scale of wages was arranged. Or, did the worker desire, she could have the finished products, up to the estimated value of her work. Before the advent of the American Red Cross at Noyon, the Baron Rothschild had supplied both the material and the market for these wares. His was, in fact, a very interesting experiment in social economics. He supplied material at cost, bought at a fixed price, and sold again at a commercial rate in Paris, the garments made:

In addition, he had established a store, in the old archiepiscopal palace at Noyon, where one could buy household necessities at cost also, and a depot for the setting up of chains of grocery stores. His idea was, not profit, but a business which should support itself and at the same time render an invaluable service to a community absolutely without stores or markets or merchandise.

The American Red Cross was able to augment quickly the amount of material furnished to the workrooms thus established, and to do it without cost. It came at a time when the Baron's experiment was drawing to a close, owing to the resumption of normal trade. In place of one sewing machine, it gave as many as were needed. The circle at Lassigny grew under this stimulus from twenty members to seventy-five. Perhaps with the idea of lessening gossip and bickering, a phonograph was supplied. But, most important of all, the American Red Cross was able to give back to Lassigny its wells. Not only were the

waters of Lassigny rendered undrinkable, as were all the wells of the devastated area, by the shoveling in of filth; they were filled to the top and grassed over. One could only guess where the wells had been. German prisoners dug out the wells in time, and the water was analyzed by army chemists and pronounced fit to drink. But there were no pumps in Lassigny until the Red Cross bought them in Paris, transported them, and set them up.

Naturally, the Red Cross delegate was the recipient of many requests for aid. All the Red Cross asked was to be of service. Hence, not long after the arrival of the delegate, the sous-préfet stationed at Noyon suggested that a small portable sawmill would be of the greatest help in furthering the repair of houses, so essential to the return of the population. Along the highways which, everywhere in France, are arched with stately trees, the Germans had left behind them thousands of felled trunks. Nor, it is interesting to note,



were most of these felled across the road to serve as barricades. Like lines of soldiers mowed down by opposing barrages they lie, mile after mile, their hacked bases to the roadside, their once green tops to the fields. The American Red Cross installed a circular steam saw to cut these trees; the American Friends' Unit furnished the man to run it, and the lumber went to make the barracks for the village of Tracy-le-Mont.

[ The civilian authorities as rapidly as possible took over more and more of the administration of the Oise from the army. Their programme of relief centered in an agricultural association of the farmers into groups known as *cooperatives*. The purpose was to band together a sufficient number of the small farmers who abound in this region to allow of the plowing of the land by tractor or by teams of horses and plows owned or rented in common. The difficulty of inducing the peasant farmers to enter into any such arrangement was great. Each had been brought up for

generations to be tenacious of his own, to be independent of his fellows. And now, at a time when landmarks were destroyed, and the very title to his property in all probability lost, he was asked to level what was left of his boundaries, to entrust a tithe of his hardly saved money to the keeping of others. At a critical moment, the American Red Cross was able to present thirty-five of these cooperatives with a plow apiece as tangible evidence of some advantage to be derived from the scheme. At Golancourt, again, the plow was in the hands of the cooperative, the horses of the Friends' Unit were ready to plow, but there was lack of oats. It was not only that oats were lacking; it was strictly forbidden to use them for fodder, as the Government was hoarding them for planting. But the Red Cross was able to supply oats.

School furniture and subsidies to replace school equipment were another form of Red Cross aid. For the Germans, in all the country artificially destroyed by them, wreaked

a special spite upon churches, town halls and schools.

Interesting as were the indirect methods of aid consistently adhered to by the American Red Cross in the Oise, it is, after all, in direct contact that human interest always lies. The appeals made to the Red Cross delegate were turned over by him to the proper source of help. But in passing through his hands, they left him with a knowledge that he was fulfilling in his way a duty very dear to the hearts of the French. An adjutant in a French Army Corps writes him: "I have the honor to call to your benevolent attention the situation of the family living at C— in the canton of Lassigny. During a tour of the front in the region most recently liberated, I was able to substantiate the following facts: The village, counting about five hundred hearths is, so to speak, entirely demolished, the few habitations still standing are open to the winds, the roofs, in spite of the hasty repairs made by the Army, let in water every-

where. Mme. X— lives alone with one little girl of five, and a boy of thirteen. She is seriously wounded and perhaps in agony. Her husband was deported as a civilian hostage into Germany. Her oldest son, married and father of a family, has been at the front since the beginning; her second son is a prisoner in Germany and the third is at the point of death, terribly burned by the explosion of a shell lying in the line of march. Mme. X— is without a single resource, the Germans having taken everything away; work tools, garden tools, mattresses, linen, and every object of value.

“During the German occupation, Mme. X— having some medical knowledge, succeeded, by a combination of tact and devotion, in nursing and in assisting all the wounded prisoners cared for in the district. She saved at the risk of her life and that of her infants, the big bronze bell of the church presented by the Emperor Napoleon.”

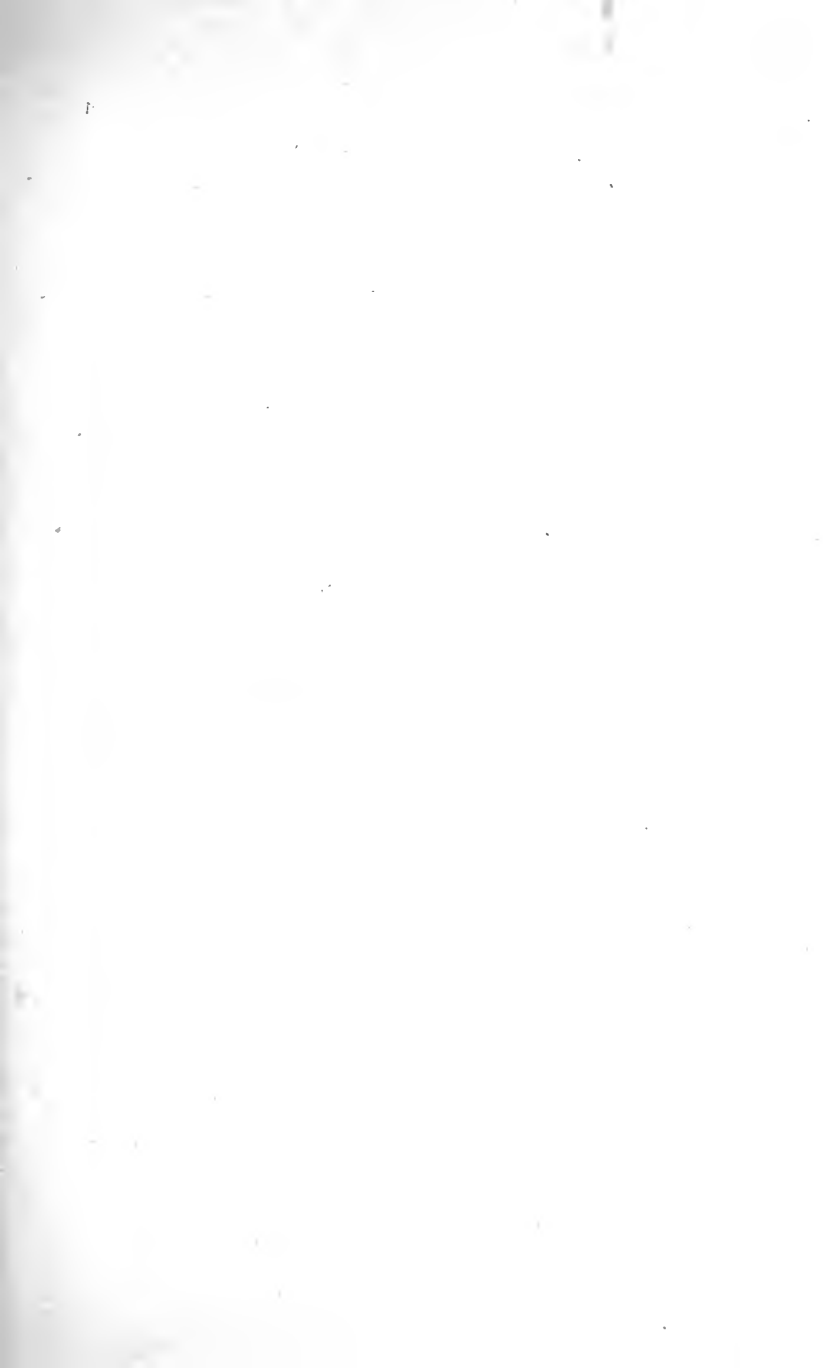
“Thinking that this woman, more than

being necessitous, was above all a heroine, I have believed it well, and have allowed myself, to call her to your kind attention."

A second letter comes from a lieutenant in the French Army, presenting the case of another family entirely unknown to him. But in his company is a soldier, who has been taken in and given shelter during his *repos* by a grandmother and her granddaughter somewhere in the Oise. They have treated him like one of the family. Now, as he is about to leave for the front, the grandmother has been taken ill; the granddaughter is young and not strong. He has already written to a married daughter at a distance. The daughter, whose husband is ill in bed, writes in turn to her brother, thinking that some arrangement can be made for her to go to their mother. But in vain. So, all these letters, carefully annotated, the lieutenant encloses with his own, asking the American Red Cross to help.

Not only was it the destitute peasants, but the unfortunates of another class that the

American Red Cross was privileged to assist. I refer especially to the heroic châtelaines of ruined châteaux. A book might be written on them in the relief work of France. Like the president of the Villages Libérés, from whom I have before quoted, many considered themselves by their very misfortunes elected to assist their more needy neighbors. In France, there are class distinctions, handed down from feudalism, which we in America do not know. The Parisian lady, of ever so charitable intentions, is as much at sea as an American in dealing with the Picard peasants. "Superstitious, stingy, independent, reserved, yet when they have once given their confidence, absolutely loyal, and brave beyond anything I have even imagined,"—this is the characterization of them given by an American worker among these peasants of France. Two ladies in the Oise rendered invaluable service by staying on their ruined estates and interpreting the needs of their dependents. One is Mme. Menget of the Babœuf Committee,





*A Street in Guiscard.*



*The Château, Ham.*

*Après le Recul Allemand, Mars 1917. Noyon, Guiscard, Ham: Armand Guéritte. Vernant & Dolle, Imprimeurs, Paris.*



and the other the Comtesse d'Evry of Nampcel. The story of the latter epitomizes the sort of help that the Red Cross has given in the Oise.

The Comtesse d'Evry had, before the war, a château on a cliff overlooking the hamlet of Nampcel which clustered about its little church in a narrow gorge. Four farms in the commune belonged to her. She had besides, two other estates, one further south in the Oise, and another in Normandy. The counts of Evry have long been established at Nampcel. Besides the rich farmlands, there had been extensive quarries there. The houses, like most in this region, were solidly built of stone. The first flying wedge of the Germans overwhelmed and destroyed the hamlet. The inhabitants fled, the Comtesse herself among them, with her little boy. The caretakers of the château, however, refused to leave. But their devotion was futile; the château was looted, soaked in kerosene and burned.

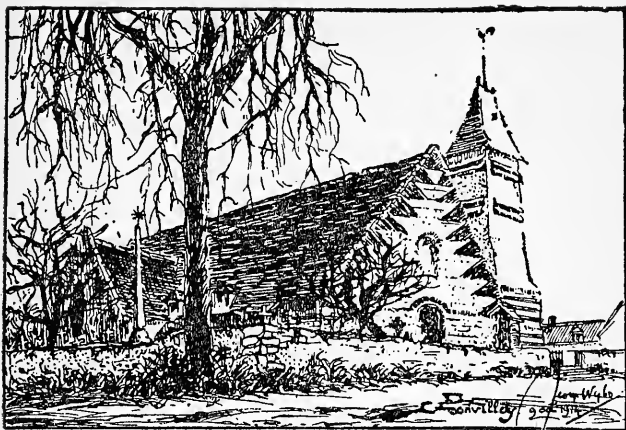
The spring of 1917, however, found the Com-

tesse back in her ruined village. Like her neighbors, she was homeless, but undaunted. She fitted up a caravan and set it, not on the isolated height, but down in the valley, among her villagers. As they returned, she cared for them and gave them employment on her farms. Her days were full, her villagers happy until in March, 1918, came the second catastrophe. The Germans returned, but the Comtesse was prepared. She had farm wagons and horses. These she divided among her people. On each she placed a store of provisions to last several days,—and that store of provisions came from the American Red Cross. Last of all she loaded the cart which was to take her boy, a lad of twelve. She put him in charge of her overseer and his wife, and started the whole slow procession off to her estate in Normandy. It lends a bright color to the picture of universal desolation to know that here, as elsewhere, the children regarded the exodus as a glorious adventure. Such are the contrasts of war.

Mme. d'Evry herself did not go to Normandy. In the midst of her second flight from Nampcel, she was already laying plans for her return. She had it in mind to plant potatoes on the lawn of her estate to the south, so as to have them ready for winter use. To this estate, therefore, she retired, and there she was able to give a temporary shelter to the personnel of the American Red Cross, when they were at last driven south from Compiègne. Strawberries, sugar and cream I have heard awaited them,—an unbelievable contrast to days of evacuating and feeding refugees, and nights of continuous bombing.

The Comtesse d'Evry's potato crop was planted, and dug, and stored away. But none too soon. By the autumn of 1918, she again went back to Nampcel. The heights about that village have been swept as by a cyclone. One locates neighboring villages by gaunt sign posts alone. Not a tree is standing. The road runs naked along the level clay ridges, except where a stretch of

battered camouflage flaps in the wind. In the valley beneath are jagged walls and German dugouts, and not a living soul. But the Comtesse can be found, housed in a quarry which served later as a stable for one of her great farms. She is planning another exodus for her villagers, this time from Normandy to Nampcel. And the American Red Cross, itself back in Compiègne, is helping to make this possible.



*Onvillers Church (Santerre)*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo.  
Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### DIRECT INTERVENTION

THE problems of the Somme were more complex than those of the Oise. In the first place, its liberated territory was divided between two armies of occupation; the western lines being held by the British, and the eastern lines by the French. It was naturally divided also into two broad economic sections, corresponding roughly to the two areas occupied by them; the manufacturing cities and

dependencies of the north, and the plain of the Santerre, par excellence, the granary of France. In the autumn of 1917, the latter had been devastated, the former had not. Two delegates were therefore assigned to the Somme, one located in Amiens, the capital of the department, and the other at Ham, the one having charge of the undevastated, and the other of the devastated area. In both places were worked out some of the variations to the Belgian scheme of relief which had been so closely adhered to in the Oise.

These hinged on the direct employment of American Red Cross personnel. In the territory controlled from Ham four experiments of this type were started: (1) Actual repair work by a Red Cross reconstruction unit in five villages near Nesle, (2) Reconstruction and rehabilitation by Friends' Units at Grunzy and Ham, to which in point of accessibility rather than to the Oise, belonged also the agricultural group at Golancourt, (3) Rehabilitation by a woman's college unit, that of

Smith College, in the villages centering about Grécourt, and (4) A civilian hospital in charge of an American Red Cross doctor at Nesle. In the Somme, then, came into play the three main bureaus of the Department of Civilian Affairs, those concerned with reconstruction, with rehabilitation and with public health.

Yet these experiments were considered at the time not so much a departure as a logical result of cooperation. It was after important conferences with the French Government and in the place selected by it that a modest beginning in reconstruction was made. It was in accordance with a far-reaching agreement with the Friends that they entered the field under Red Cross auspices; it was in an effort to use the enthusiasm of the women's colleges of America that the policy of college units was approved, and it was at the actual request of the French Government and the agent of the French Red Cross there that the civilian hospital was established at Nesle. As a matter of fact, the hospital cannot be con-

sidered a new departure, doctors, nurses and medicines having been from the first one of the most important contributions of America to France. The hospital at Nesle was, however, the first civilian hospital opened by the American Red Cross in the devastated area.

The revival of agriculture, primarily, was made the basis of French government relief. It was in order to produce food that the cultivator was allowed to remain on, or assisted by the Government to return to, his farm. The angle of America on this problem is well put in a Red Cross report already quoted from: "Idle land in France means an extra burden on tonnage from America. Idle land in France means more soldiers, more food-stuffs, more ammunition from the United States of America. . . . At least one man in our organization has asked: 'How many ounces of bread is a brick worth?'" There came a new slogan into Red Cross activity: "Housing follows the plow."

[ In that part of Picardy now designated as



the Somme, large farms, even in the American sense of the word, were the rule. For instance, in Croix-Molineaux, one of the villages selected for repair, there were farms varying from 500 acres, 300 acres, 200 acres, down to twelve acres. As a rule, the farm buildings hereabouts cluster in villages, owing to two causes, first, protection—an idea dating from feudal times—and secondly, the high value of land. The structure of each ménage reflects these two principles; economy of space, and security. Despite its one story of height, necessitated by the soft brick, or clay wattling of which it is made, it is compactly built around a central court, this court containing the most coveted possession of the farmer, his piles of manure. Opening directly from the street, and usually through the barn, is the arched gateway, wide enough and high enough to receive the harvest wains. Not only is the barn the first, it is the largest building of the enclosure and serves as both grange and threshing floor. On either wing

of it are built the stables, the rabbit hutches, the hen houses—all of brick—without which a farm in Picardy would not be a farm. Opposite the great gate, and forming the back wall of the rectangle, is the farmer's house. From this coign of vantage, he surveys and guards his domain. "When the wheat has entered, when the gate is closed, the house is entirely shut, and the street appears blind. In each direction extends a long line of blank, monotonous walls, giving to the village an aspect silent and dead. One can see that everything is designed for the convenience of farm labor. Nothing is sacrificed to the comfort of the owner, for whom his house, as well as his field, is an implement of toil. It exemplifies a form of life very ancient, since in the enactments of the thirteenth century one finds the Picard farm described as it stands to-day. It is a manner of life adapted for all time to these fertile lands which for twenty centuries the plow has turned without hindrance, and where France, in the critical hours of her his-

tory, has been able to count on the greatest of her strength.”\*

In villages such as this, at Croix-Molineaux, Matigny and “Y” the American Red Cross began temporary repairs, first of the houses, then of the barns, and finally, of the schools. Their lumber they drew from two sources, the French Government through what was familiarly called the Moroccan Camp at Nesle, and the Red Cross itself through its warehouse at Ham. Their gang of workmen they recruited themselves among civilians, subject, of course, to the limitations imposed by military service. On the advice of the French architect who made the survey and later became an associate head of the bureau, and in accordance with the policy of the French Government, these repairs were made against a future indemnity of war. That is, each farmer whose roof was patched, or whose windows were set in, in case these repairs were of a permanent nature, understood that he would

\* Paul Léon: *La Renaissance des Ruines*.

eventually pay for them from the sum allowed him by the government to cover his loss. Naturally, work was hampered by many obstacles; the difficulty of obtaining efficient labor, and the limited supply of material, particularly lumber. The needs of the army came first, always; and the needs of individuals and of private contractors had equal claims with the Red Cross on the lumber turned out by the government at the Moroccan camp. The taking over of the French lines in the Somme by the British in January, 1918, caused other difficulties, owing to different regulations in regard to civilian operations behind the lines. Nevertheless, progress was made, and by the end of January, 1918, forty farms had been repaired, twenty-seven of them completely, according to the specifications. At this time, a force of thirty men was being employed. By March, two more villages in the neighborhood were in process of renovation, and one hundred houses in all had been repaired.

Near neighbors to this group of villages were those of the Friends, whom it will not be out of place to consider here as an integral part of the American Red Cross. At Grunzy, near Roye, was located a company of fifteen workers, who undertook repairs of houses for four villages assigned them by the French Government. They were allowed to take materials from uninhabited ruins for rebuilding, and did a very substantial piece of work. Working with them was an agricultural unit which plowed, seeded and restocked the farms. At Ham, another construction unit of six worked up toward the St. Quentin front, in the Aisne, erecting demountable houses for the Government. These houses were made at their own factory in the Jura mountains. Four such houses, of two or three rooms, were constructed there each week, from lumber requisitioned for them by the Government, and the finished product became the property of the Ministry of the Interior. This unit at Ham, largely augmented, went out

later to put up barracks for the nearby villages in the Somme. While engaged in this work, the Friends lived with the families among the ruins, and by their presence did far more service than can be measured by the buildings they put up. In all, they mounted eighty barracks.

As the construction unit left Ham, another charged with relief work took over its quarters, working from Ham in an assigned area comprising twelve villages, and in the town itself.

The agricultural group at Golancourt has already been mentioned. Like all private agencies who attempted this line of work, their aim was to assist the small holder, the needs of the *grands cultivateurs* being met by the Government scheme of tractor plows, manned by soldiers. Four hundred tractors were already at work behind the lines, when the Friends made their first survey of the Somme. By spring, with the aid of the British Army, whose agricultural programme was as fully developed as the French, 28,000

acres had been thus plowed in the department. But, naturally, wholesale plowing could not be done in kitchen gardens, or fields of small acreage. To meet the needs of these petty farmers, whose aggregate holdings were quite as important as those of the landed estates, the Friends had horses, plows and personnel. They were stocking their farms also with chickens and rabbits, to breed them for the countryside.

The work of the Friends' agricultural and constructive centers dovetailed with that of the Smith College Relief Unit, for they came into the villages of Hombleux and Esmery-Hallon, assigned to the latter, to put up barracks. This Smith College Unit was primarily a rehabilitation unit, the first to be sent out by a woman's college to France. It received its assignment of villages through the American Fund for French Wounded, and worked as a part of the French Service de Santé until transferred to the American Red Cross in February, 1918.

Its personnel of sixteen members covered sixteen villages, or a territory of thirty-six square miles. Its method, in general, was to give outright the larger necessities, such as furniture, bedding and stoves, but to sell at a low cost smaller articles, such as clothing, kitchen utensils, and soap. Live stock also was sold, for the reason that what was paid for was appreciated and cared for by its owner. Milk, too, was sold from a herd of cows, at six cents a quart. And all of these articles were taken by the Unit in their cars through the villages, so that their advent, on stated days, came to be looked forward to. They furnished a neighborhood center of traffic and gossip analogous to the village fair. Like all the relief agencies they gave out sewing.

But the two lines of effort which won the warmest praise from the French authorities for the Unit, were their dispensaries and their activities for children. Two doctors and three nurses' aids made the rounds of the villages weekly, not only holding dispensaries,



but visiting the patients in their homes. Conditions needing the attention of the visitors charged with relief, or of those occupied with children, were then noted and acted on. Most of the patients being children, the children's visitors were the doctor's strong allies.

Yet they were careful to identify themselves unmistakably with their special function, which was to bring happiness to the six hundred children in their charge. These children had survived strange and terrible things; bombardments, deportations, wholesale destruction, the billetings of hostile troops, with all the incident restrictions upon them, the no less alien appearance of the British troops who found them in their still smoking ruins, and told them that they were free. They had, most of them, neither fathers nor elder brothers, since these were either at the front or hostages of war. Without schools, without churches, they had run wild for three and a half years.

Such children needed diversion, and for

them play centers were established in every village. Schools, behind the front, were bound to function irregularly, however devoted the teachers. Those unable to attend school were taught; sewing classes were held for the girls and carpentry classes for the boys. A traveling library of a thousand volumes rejoiced the hearts of both young and old. For it must never be forgotten that the French peasantry, however close they live to the soil—possibly because of it—are among the keenest minds in the world. In this respect they are analogous to our own old rural stock which gave us Daniel Webster, Abraham Lincoln, and our host of country boys who have become our self-made men.

The emphasis placed on work for children may be judged by the request for the establishing of a Red Cross hospital at Nesle. It was on behalf of the twelve hundred children in Nesle and the surrounding villages that this request was made. The medical situation was typical of that throughout the devas-

tated area. There was an old hospital, under the care of Sisters of Charity, which had been used by the Germans and stripped of everything before their retreat. There was one civilian doctor who had literally no instruments, no drugs, and no means of conveyance. There was a military surgeon, who, in addition to his army duties, cared for twenty-five villages. There was a midwife, whose services at this time were little needed, so long had families been separated.

A former tuberculosis pavilion, sunny and pleasantly set in a quaint garden, was allotted to the American Red Cross. The staff, consisting of the doctor, a trained nurse, and two nurses' aids, arrived at nightfall, cold and wet. No fire awaited them, but there was promise of future warmth in a white tiled Dutch stove which their predecessor, the Herr Doktor of some German staff, had had built in for his comfort. It was out of repair, as was the plumbing, and the whole place was in need of more than a spring house cleaning. But

it was rapidly put in order, and two wards of twelve beds, white and spotless, made ready for the little patients. The Pavillon Joffre, as it was named, was the only civilian hospital within a radius of twenty-five miles. A traveling dispensary was part of the equipment of the hospital, and visited seven outlying villages. At the suggestion of the Mayor of Voyennes, one of the towns served, it carried a shower bath. Fresh milk, supplied by the authorities, and canned milk, by the American Red Cross, was distributed to infants and supplementary feeding given to undernourished children.

In brief, the service of the little hospital at Nesle was a home service. Its staff physicians add their quota of testimony to the character of the people they were privileged to help. Though large families in this section are the rule and though the able-bodied and the bread winners were absent, there was no thought of putting the waifs and strays of war into institutions. Individual families in

the communes took the orphans into their already crowded hovels, fed and clothed and cared for them. The war, which had leveled their homes, had leveled them in a common misfortune. And as one wonders how the old farm buildings, those massive, isolated entities of the thirteenth century can be rebuilt, one wonders also if the patriarchal form of life they typify can ever be revived. Has not a new consciousness of solidarity, of neighborliness been born, which will outlast the war? In this consciousness, the American Red Cross, coming from so great a distance, so unknown a country, on an errand of mercy which expresses the solidarity of the whole world, has its share.



*Laon Cathedral*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo, Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER IX

### "POLISHING THE TARNISHED MIRRORS"

IN the midst of its separate activities, the American Red Cross as a distributing center must not be overlooked. There were two warehouses, one at Ham, and the other at Nesle, supplying the region from Péronne to Golancourt. These had a transportation ser-

vice of five trucks. The activity of this branch may be judged by the testimony of a representative of the French Red Cross that it furnished sixty per cent of all the aid given in this sector. Yet there were strong and efficient agencies in the field; that of the Government itself not being the least. M. Quélien, the special sous-préfet at Nesle charged with the problems of reconstruction, was intensely interested in the needs of his department. He made the federation of the societies working with him to this end a real thing, calling them into conference together each month, sharing with them what supplies he had at his disposal, and requiring of them in turn monthly reports. He went about in person, not only to inspect, but to learn how he might be of service to them. His zeal on behalf of the civilians was, if anything, surpassed by that of the commandant of the Third Army in charge of this sector, stationed at Ham. He again was rivaled by his colleague, the commandant at Guiscard,

whose interest ranged from large contributions from his private purse, and rebuilding of villages by details of soldiers, to hunting up a donkey—a very small and gentle donkey—to carry relief supplies. The Department of Agriculture, already mentioned, was also strong in the Somme. Its tractors were busy plowing almost on the heels of the German retreat. The military *chefs de service* had their offices in every considerable group of villages; the repairing of farm implements, and the selling of army horses no longer fit for campaigning, but still useful in the furtherance of their plan, were systematically carried on.

Among private agencies, the French Red Cross, represented by the Union des Femmes de France, was most fortunate in its delegates at Nesle, M. and Mme. Amedée Vernes. M. Vernes, a manufacturer of large interests and a member of one of those Protestant families of culture which have kept their faith since the days of the Huguenots, took







*A Street in Ham.*



*The Mill on the Somme, Ham.*

*Après le Recul Allemand, Mars 1917. Noyon, Guiscard, Ham: Armand Guéritte. Vernant & Dolle, Imprimeurs, Paris.*

## “Polishing Tarnished Mirrors” III

his wife and went to live in Nesle. The fact that they had themselves lost much, and had given their two sons to the cause, made them peculiarly sympathetic with the people whom they were trying to assist. It was M. Vernes who was designated by the Ministry of the Interior to be the head of the departmental federation of private organizations under M. Quellien. At Ham, Mme. Roussel headed another committee for the Union. She, too, is a remarkable character—for she, like M. and Mme. Vernes, is again back at her post. Though eighty years of age, she nursed the French wounded in Ham throughout the German occupation. German officers, naturally, were quartered upon her; gentlemanly appearing men, very punctilious in handing her in to dinner every night. But on the day of their departure, they packed up her ancestral clock before her eyes, and loaded it onto a van, and took it to Germany.

Mme. Vernes and Mme. Roussel, besides distributing relief supplies running up into

between twenty and thirty thousand articles, organized two flourishing sewing circles. In Nesle, one hundred and sixty women were employed. The material and the sewing machines and a considerable amount of money were in each case furnished by the American Red Cross. In fact the Union des Femmes de France speaks itself in its Bulletin de Guerre of the aid accorded it throughout by us. "The American Red Cross," it reads, "places generously at the disposal of the delegate and the nurses of the Union des Femmes de France, articles of every kind and lends them the precious assistance of its automobiles in visiting the villages and assuring their supply of food."

Located at Nesle was also another efficient relief agency, the French Wounded Emergency Fund. This was a British unit, of eight to ten workers, having nineteen villages west of Nesle in their charge. But as they had their own warehouse and their transport service, they were little indebted to us. On the taking

over of the French lines by the British, however, in January, 1918, they were compelled by the regulations of the British Army to retire, these regulations not allowing British civilian workers so near the front. Their villages were then taken over by the Union des Femmes de France.

An interesting experiment at Rosières, half way between Nesle and Amiens, started oddly enough under the auspices of the British Army just as that same army closed down the work of its countrywomen at Nesle. But the work at Rosières was undertaken by a Franco-American agency, the Fund for War Devastated Villages, which did not come under the rules laid down by the British Army for organizations of its own nationality. To Rosières and six neighboring villages comprising five hundred persons, one American worker was assigned. There is an advantage in not having a large staff which this worker fully realized; she got her cooperation from her villagers themselves. Among them she was

fortunate in finding such mayors and country gentlemen as have been written about in all French accounts of the invaded territory, men—and women too—who by their bravery have upheld the best traditions of Picardy. At Beaufort, for example, lived in his Château the old Count de Lupel. In 1914, when the Germans first took the village, they requisitioned certain of the count's employees, to serve as hostlers, since the count was well known to them as a famous breeder of horses. But the count had hidden his men, nor would he deliver them over, although he was threatened and actually led out to be shot. In 1918, on the return of the Germans, equally solicitous for his dependents, he gave up his last horse and wagon to them and escaped himself on foot. The mayor of the commune was a man no less devoted, and possessed in addition, that marvel of energy in French village politics, a wife. The mayor's wife was a devout Catholic, and as such opposed to the public school, which in France, as in America,

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allows no religious instruction. She, therefore, opened a Catholic school, and saw to it that all the girls, at least, attended. She was interested in all matters of public welfare, and it was she who ordered and generated the retreat of the villagers in the spring of 1918.

But in the three months from January to March, before that catastrophe, much had been accomplished in rehabilitation. The pressing needs of the villages had been met; seeds were ready for distribution; children's work was starting; a quantity of wool was in store for the knitting which was to become a village industry. In this general distribution, the American Red Cross gave its share.

About a month later than the experiment at Rosières there was opened at Péronne, a dispensary, hospital, and relief station under the joint management of the Village Reconstitué and the Secours aux Blessés Militaires of the French Red Cross. Before the German drive, 169 families, in nine villages,

had been reached by the devoted nurses in charge.

Roye, southwest of Nesle, had two relief agencies, that of Mrs. Duryea of New York, and that of the Secours d'Urgence. The former operated in many villages, giving out emergency relief. The latter established here a *poste de secours* which was a model of its kind. The Secours d'Urgence makes the proud claim of being the first French society to undertake civilian relief in the devastated area, and Roye, situated for three years in the No-Man's Land of continuous bombardment, was its first post. Like most of the larger French societies, it had been occupied up to the spring of 1917 with the needs of the soldiers under the well-known name of the "Bureau Central des Écloppés."

With the liberation of the Somme, an appeal came to the Bureau on behalf of the civilian population, not from civilians, but from an officer in the army. Mlle. Javel went up at his request and saw the desert about Roye.



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Yet what could the Bureau do, with its resources already strained to the utmost? The founders collected ten thousand francs among their friends as a beginning. They had, first, their typical shelter, and their nurses. With the cooperation of the army, they made repairs. They installed a large farm with a dairy, supplying butter and milk. They started industries, such as sewing, and in addition to sewing circles, gave out work at home. They had factories for mattresses and for furniture. They equipped and manned completely with doctor and nurses, a civilian hospital of twenty beds at Roye. They had gardens tended by children, where four thousand cabbages were raised. Eventually, they cared for sixty-nine villages. Aid for this work came to them from many sources, as they acknowledge them in their reports, from as far away as Sidney, and from the “Croix-Rouge Américaine.” The support of the latter was whole hearted and generous to the limit of its capacity at Ham and Nesle.

Although, geographically, the latest effort of the Secours d'Urgence for the devastated area does not belong to the Somme alone, but to all of France, its place is here. It concerns itself with Christmas. In 1917, throughout the liberated area, the government, the church, and agencies occupied with relief there, gave to the children the first Christmas they had had for three years. In 1918, a vaster field was freed by the armistice. The same effort was repeated. But it was the Secours d'Urgence which thought of an ideal way. With the approval of no less a person than M. Clemenceau they enlisted the children of all the public kindergartens, in all the departments of France, to make a Christmas for their "unknown brothers and sisters, deprived for so long of every joy." The presents came by the millions, each accompanied by a little letter to the unknown recipient. Most of them were given, not by children of wealth, but by the poor, many of them themselves tiny refugees. One little girl of five

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came with her teacher to the office of the society, to say that she would give her doll. “But,” she added, “I want to remain with her as long as I can.” The kind-hearted lady in charge of the office told her the very latest date on which she must return. When she came, with her eyes full of tears, her doll held tightly to her cheek, the lady thought she would never be able to give it up. But she did, saying only: “Please tell her that she must take care of my doll as I did, and love her as I used to do!” Another story is that of a little boy who had nothing, nothing at all except some pills. He had been a refugee, starved and ill, and these cod-liver oil pills, which a doctor had given him, had been a great help. He would share them! So, in the quaint English of the lady who told the incident, “he took them to the Bureau precious, for those pills meant health to him, his own health.”

To have aided, much or little as the case may be, such efforts as are recorded here, is it

not, in the words a noted French writer quotes in regard to this very society, to have helped in "polishing the tarnished mirrors, in restoring the ideal flame?"



*House on the Luce Plateau (near Amiens).*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo. Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER X

### BEHIND THE BRITISH LINES

THE activities centering at Amiens differentiate themselves sharply from those of the southern end of the department. In the first place, Amiens was behind the British lines which, at this point, never broke. The city, itself, though severely bombarded during the last German advance in the spring of 1918, was not devastated, and stood as a bulwark for the territory stretching from it to the channel, which the Germans never took. But un-

scathed as it was at the time that the American Red Cross entered it, in September, 1917, it had been for three years—what it still is—one of the main gateways for the passing and re-passing of refugees. In the Somme, there were over thirty-five thousand of these, not counting at all those who had remained in, or found their way back to, their villages in the devastated area itself. Half of these refugees were crowded into the city, which was further strained beyond its housing capacity by thousands of British troops. Add to this the fact that building—except for absolutely necessary army barracks for army purposes—had ended automatically with the call to arms, and one can see the enormous problem in public health and in housing presented by the city of Amiens. In short, in an acute and exaggerated form, the problem was the same as that facing our city charities at home; congestion and lack of employment, resulting in insufficient nourishment and the spread of disease.

The city of Amiens, the Department of which it is the capital, and the Ministry of the Interior behind both had already perfected an admirable scheme for the handling of the transient refugees, who passed from bombarded areas to the south, or from the south back to liberated villages. Shelters, in charge of the army, were always ready to accommodate them, to the number of twelve hundred and fifty at a time; a stipulated sum of money was given each refugee on his arrival for immediate needs, food, of course, and clothing as necessary. Afterwards he was painstakingly helped to reach his destination. Lieut. Pianelli, who administered this relief, was himself a refugee from St. Quentin, and his own wife was a German captive. It goes without saying that the handling of the endless stream of refugees at Amiens was done with sympathetic care.

But the refugee unable to get beyond Amiens, or choosing to remain there, became the concern of the city and of the prefecture.

If in need, he had, of course, his allowance from the government, as a refugee. Or if the dependent of a soldier, an approximately equal amount was paid. Of the ten thousand refugees in Amiens to whom these allowances were granted nearly fifteen hundred were the wives, widows or children of the soldiers of France. Committees, styled departmental committees, composed of public-spirited citizens, assisted in the care of the refugees of their respective departments. Of these, there were four; that of the Nord, that of the Aisne, that of the Pas-de-Calais, and that of the Somme itself. There were private agencies also, the largest and most influential being that of the *Secours aux Blessés Militaires* of the French Red Cross. The *Secours d'Urgence*, and the *Somme Dévastée* among French societies, had posts established here also, the latter being one of the many organizations founded by the wealthy and patriotic ladies of the devastated area itself.

Among foreign societies, and most directly



concerning this narrative, were the American Fund for French Wounded and the Secours Anglo-Américain pour les Réfugiés. The latter, under American management, had already been operating two years among the fugitives in Amiens when the American Red Cross delegate arrived. Five resident workers, of whom one was a nurse, and six French volunteer workers comprised its staff. With the close cooperation of the Préfet, one of whose daughters was a regular volunteer visitor, they organized the type of charitable relief we know in America as district visiting. They also started the first workroom in Amiens for the women refugees. Their support, while drawn from many sources, came largely, at this time, from the American Relief Clearing House. They therefore naturally turned to the American Red Cross for a similar subsidy. The result was that the latter took over and enlarged their activities and absorbed their personnel.

In addition to this, and in cooperation with

the American Fund for French Wounded, the American Red Cross through its Children's Bureau opened a dispensary for the refugees in Amiens, in March, 1918. This was an extension of the dispensary of Nesle. But in so far as these two lines of service affect the refugees, the details of their development fall outside the limits of this book. In fact, the delegate of the Red Cross in Amiens, being assigned to the undevastated area of the Somme, was in reality the first of the many refugee delegates who were later sent by the Refugee Bureau of the Red Cross to similar service in every department of France.

Two phases of the Red Cross work in Amiens belong here, however; that of the warehouse, and that of the workroom already mentioned, started by the Secours Anglo-Américain. From a group of twelve workers, in September, 1917, this had grown in February, 1918, to thirty-two workers, turning out four hundred and eighty finished garments a week. It consumed materials on a wholesale scale, as illus-

trated by requisitions for four thousand meters flannel, fifteen hundred meters sateen, black, for pinafores, fifteen hundred meters velveteen, for suits, thirty-six dozen boxes of thread, and ten thousand buttons. But the unique service of this workroom was the one designed and carried into operation by the Red Cross delegate. It cut and shipped to all workrooms within reaching distance, the garments which they in turn made up. Thus it became the center of supply for the *ouvroirs* at Nesle, Ham, Lassigny and Noyon, already mentioned, an important cog in the chain of cooperation which the American Red Cross was trying to forge. It was also, with every *ouvroir* in France, a connecting link between the refugees temporarily, at least, static, and the refugees in transit or in process of establishment, the one class being engaged in filling that immense reservoir from which the other might draw.

The warehouse in Amiens, like the workroom, served both classes of unfortunates, the refugees in the undevastated area, and the

*sinistrés* (sufferers) and *rapatriés*, (repatriates) as the French conveniently designate them, who were trying to make a fresh start in the two devastated departments north of the Somme, the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais. Arras had been selected as a center for the latter, and a separate delegate appointed to it, but an actual warehouse was never established there. This city, in normal times possessing a population of 29,000, had been under constant bombardment since the beginning of the war, until in the spring of 1917, the victory of Vimy Ridge freed it from immediate menace. At one time only three hundred souls remained in it, subsisting in cellars. Its historic town hall was already in ruins; the wheat lands about it were devastated by one of the greatest struggles of the war. The porticoes of the Petite Place, where "on the prettiest stage in the world the triumphal fête of the grain was conducted with all its peaceable outcry," lay shattered; the fields themselves were shell-plowed wastes.

Yet the prefecture and the army were already at work, with tractors and construction gangs. The American Red Cross, entering on its activities here simultaneously with the private French agencies, instead of after them, as in the Somme and the Oise, put itself as did they, at the disposal of the civil authorities. No federation of the societies was attempted for this reason; and the cooperation of the Red Cross delegate with the government was direct. This was considered the most practical method also, owing to the stringent rulings of the British army zone.

As it was, great difficulties were encountered, no warehouse could be found, and no transportation by truck arranged. To make the situation more difficult, there was not—as there is not to this day\*—a direct rail communication with Amiens. The railroad across the battlefields has been wiped out. But at last, on February 25, 1918, the first general

\* January, 1919.

distribution to the outlying villages was made. The mayors of thirty-two communes were invited to come in person to receive the goods allotted to them. Into the ruins of Arras, that wintry day, they came, in every imaginable makeshift of a vehicle, not to chaffer or to buy, but to receive the gifts to their communes of the American Red Cross. From the Church of the Ardents, half-destroyed, were taken four hundred and twenty-seven wheelbarrows which had been stored there; from the warerooms loaned by the Prefecture, two hundred and twelve sacks of sugar and twelve thousand francs' worth of farming tools.

What a contrast to former market days when "under the arcades were heaped casks, boxes, coils of rope, hardware, faïence, old iron, a host of heterogeneous objects. And amid them all, the smell of the barrooms, of pipes, of 'bistouilles,' of pungent beer; the slow descent and balancing of the tame pigeons, and at regular intervals, the melo-

dies of the chimes which seemed to shake from their toy gables showers of goblins and gnomes.”\*

Yet a beginning in rehabilitation in the Pas-de-Calais was made, and plans were under way for a second delegate and a larger staff to push a larger scheme of service when the spring drive came. To-day Arras lies level with the plain about it—not even the belfry stands to mark the site of the old town hall.

\* Henri Potez: *Villes Meurtries de France*: Arras.



*Lowland Farm (near Soissons.)*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo, Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER XI

### THE PERSONAL TOUCH

WHO has not heard of the bitterly contested Chemin des Dames, of the well-nigh impregnable plateau of Craonne, of the capture of Soissons, crowning place of Clovis, of St. Quentin, and Château-Thierry where the American dead lie to-day on the hill slopes, a memorial to the valor of the American Army to which was given the glory of saving Paris in 1918? All these allied victories belong to that comparatively small political division now



called the Aisne, but formerly known by the proud title of the Ile de France. All were preceded by defeats which laid in ruins the five arrondissements of the department.

Naturally the devastation of the Aisne is quite complete. In the summer of 1917, after the German retreat, the heights of Craonne, and the Chemin des Dames upon their summit, were still in the hands of the Germans. About the base of this promontory to the south and the west lay the lowlands of the liberated area, from which fifty per cent of the civilians had been carried into captivity, and the remainder of the population had fled as refugees.

Before the war, "the Ile de France was always a great center of crowded population, a population gay and seemly, distributed not in large cities, but in little villages and hamlets which clustered in the valleys and on the hills, animating the countryside and the perspective of the horizon by the picturesque silhouettes of their lovely churches, and by the grouping of their cheerful cottages embowered

in orchards and gardens. Châteaux, ancient and modern, princely or bourgeois, were numerous. Everywhere breathed a sense of well-being, of ease and of wealth.”\*

Into this region, once so fertile and now so disfigured, the American Red Cross entered in September, 1917, establishing at Soissons what grew to be the largest of its warehouses, which never carried a stock of less than ten thousand dollars' worth. The other agencies at work in this department for the returning fugitives were only four in number; the government and the army, the American Fund for French Wounded, the Aisne Dévastée and the Village Reconstitué working together, and the Bishop of Soissons. Between the American Fund for French Wounded as a whole, and the American Red Cross, a definite affiliation had been established, and this was extended to the civilian section of the American Fund located in the eastern part of the Aisne at Blérancourt. The history of this society

\* Marius Vachon: *Les Villes Martyres de France et de Belgique*.

and of our relations with it, which covered work in six of the devastated departments, becomes of interest.

The American Fund for French Wounded was, in point of time, the first of all American societies to come to the aid of France. It grew out of the American Committee formed by Mr. Hoover in London for the relief of American refugees, who, by the thousands, were driven out of the continent at the opening of hostilities in 1914. By autumn, their needs had been met, but in October a French woman came to the office of the Committee and chanced to find Mrs. Lathrop there. She begged for the French wounded, and so effectively that a committee was formed by Mrs. Lathrop in London, with a supporting branch in America. In 1915, this American branch established its own headquarters in Paris, as the American Fund for French Wounded. It has worked from the beginning with the French army and more recently with the American army. But it has also done

work for civilians, for the same reason that the American Red Cross has done work for civilians, because war was carried systematically by Germany into the homes of civilians. The first appeal for this help came from Noyon. From that time the A. F. F. W. began the collecting of supplies for civilian relief. In all the chapters of the society in America, garments cut in French patterns were made. Money was raised, equipment bought, and in June, 1917, the Civilian Section began its work. To it the military authorities assigned two posts in the devastated area, one at Blérancourt in the Aisne, and the other, manned by the Smith College Unit, already mentioned, in the Somme.

In Blérancourt itself three hundred of the fifteen hundred peace-time population were back. Besides Blérancourt, fourteen neighboring villages were assigned to the unit. Before the spring offensive of 1918, these villages had increased to forty. Repair work was effectively carried on with the help of the

army; and the shelters erected were in each case furnished throughout. A dispensary was opened in charge of a nurse, and later of a doctor. A children's department under a French teacher of special training in industrial schools was established, with cooking classes for the girls, carpentry classes for the boys, and gymnastics for all. It is interesting to note that the cooperation of army officers was enlisted for these carpentry classes, and the actual teaching done by soldiers assigned by them for the purpose. The material used was largely the boxes in which supplies for the committee had been packed. The tables, chairs, and book cases made went either to the school, or to the boys' own homes.

There was a model dairy, from which fifty families were supplied with milk. Most important of all, there was a comprehensive agricultural programme commensurate with the richness of the soil, which yields normally three times the average crop per acre of that produced in other parts of France.

Besides the American Fund for French Wounded, the Aisne Dévastée and the Village Reconstitué were the only private agencies which had established themselves in the district. The function of the Village Reconstitué, here as elsewhere, was to erect the plant for the society distributing relief. There was need of this; for at the head of the Aisne Dévastée were two devoted women of the department, the one, Mme. Firino, having given over what remained of her château to the army, and the other, Mme. Houdé, being likewise a typical châtelaine of the north country—the châtelaine of a ruin. But Mme. Houdé was typical in another, more vital sense. Before the war she had taken the greatest interest in the welfare of her dependents. A friend who lived with her was a nurse. With her help she established gymnastic classes for a hundred young girls and boys of the village: She was concerned also about their manners and their morals, instructing classes herself in that greatest of all

arts, the making of a home. It was inevitable that Mme. Houdé should have interested herself, after the invasion, not only in the welfare of her own people, but in that of the entire department. It was owing to her that the Aisne Dévastée was organized. In the early spring of 1917, it had been able to send emergent help to more than fifty communes. It had its workrooms, in the uninvaded departments, from which its storeroom in Paris was supplied. But it had not that most essential thing in the devastated area, transportation.

This lack, the American Red Cross and the American Fund for French Wounded, uniting in the Red Cross center at Soissons, did their best to meet. As more of the invaded territory was freed by the successive advances of the French army during the autumn, lack of personnel was another keenly felt want. Two members of the Blérancourt Unit, and two members of the staff of the American Red Cross, were therefore sent out as agents to

report on the actual needs of the villages in the care of the Aisne Dévastée. In accordance with the findings of the visitors, the goods in the warehouse were distributed.

Other distributors of Red Cross relief were the Bishop of Soissons and his priests. From the latter came indirectly a touching appeal for help. It was brought by the Comtesse de Bigode, whose own château and village were laid in ruins, and whose husband, remaining for three years as mayor of the village during the German occupation, had been taken like so many, a hostage to Germany. But the Comtesse asked help only for the Bishop, who was "in complete need of everything for his clergy and had nothing with which to celebrate divine service—a black misery." Nor did he know where to turn for help, though he had come back to his ruined cathedral in Soissons to do what he could. The Bishop's equally touching thanks for the aid the American Red Cross gave belong here also. "With the sending of my receipt for the packages



which you shipped me," he writes, "I consider it my humble duty to express to you my warm feelings of gratitude. I pray God, the source of all charity, to reward worthily those who, following his Holy Commandments, have compassion on their unfortunate brethren."

But this help was by no means given to the usual poor relief of the church. For instance, one village curé, using his head as well as his heart, found that his parishioners in need of the stoves and boilers furnished him by the American Red Cross for distribution, were anxious to pay for them. He therefore sold them on the installment plan, netted ninety-five francs and reinvested this capital in articles the Red Cross did not carry in stock.

The sous-préfet and the mayors of the communes, as in the Pas-de-Calais, owing to the few agencies at work, had more put at their direct disposal in the Aisne than in the departments where the relief agencies were more numerous. Here, too, cooperation was excellent. One town received a carload of pro-

visions which was unloaded by the school children and placed in the mayor's cellar awaiting his distribution. In another, Pommiers (Apple Orchards), where the mayor, an old man, was also the delegate of the Aisne Dévastée for the district, hot lunches were provided for the school children during the winter. Without this the children, many of whom walked two or three kilometres, could not have attended school. In another village, practically inaccessible to markets, an old woman was set up in a grocery store; a double form of help, giving her an income and the village a means of subsistence.

It becomes evident that the work of the American Red Cross in the Aisne, centering as it did both investigation and supply in the warehouse organization at Soissons, and using so few outside agents, was the most personal of the four warehouse organizations already studied. It was the least formal, requiring no set federation, but preventing overlapping by this centralization. Yet it covered a wide

territory, and already had another branch established at Château-Thierry, a hospital, and a chain of workrooms in process of formation when the spring drive came.

It abounds in personal incidents, such as that of the young girl who ran to embrace the visitor of the American Fund for French Wounded, thanking her for what she had done. "But," the visitor protested, "I have never seen you before." "No," was the reply, "for I was not here, but you did everything for my mother and my grandmother, and that is more than if you had done it for me." There was the poor old woman in Château-Thierry who pressed thirty francs upon the Red Cross delegate saying that she and some of the neighbors wished to give them as a contribution because the Red Cross had moved some sick friends of theirs from the danger zone to Paris. There was the small merchant whose house and store were destroyed by bombs, but whose household goods were rescued. "Say also," he writes, "to those gentlemen of the

American Red Cross how grateful I am to them for having saved my cherished heirlooms. What the days to follow may bring, we do not know, but the remembrance of the kindly feelings you have evoked in us, will remain alive and be for us a precious comfort."

The Red Cross kept its economic end in view, to aid the producers, and primarily the agricultural producers, of the Aisne. It kept in touch also with those needs which are met only by personal interest. One is reminded of the ether dream of a certain soldier, who fancied that he of all living beings had survived the destruction of the world. Only he and God were left to survey the ghastly inferno of His once fair handiwork. So vivid was the dream, so horrible the sense of utter isolation, that the patient turned to the nurse: "I beg your pardon," he said, "but would you mind just touching my hand?" That personal contact is the most valuable gift that the Red Cross gave in the inferno of the Aisne.



*Street in Fontenoy.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo. Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

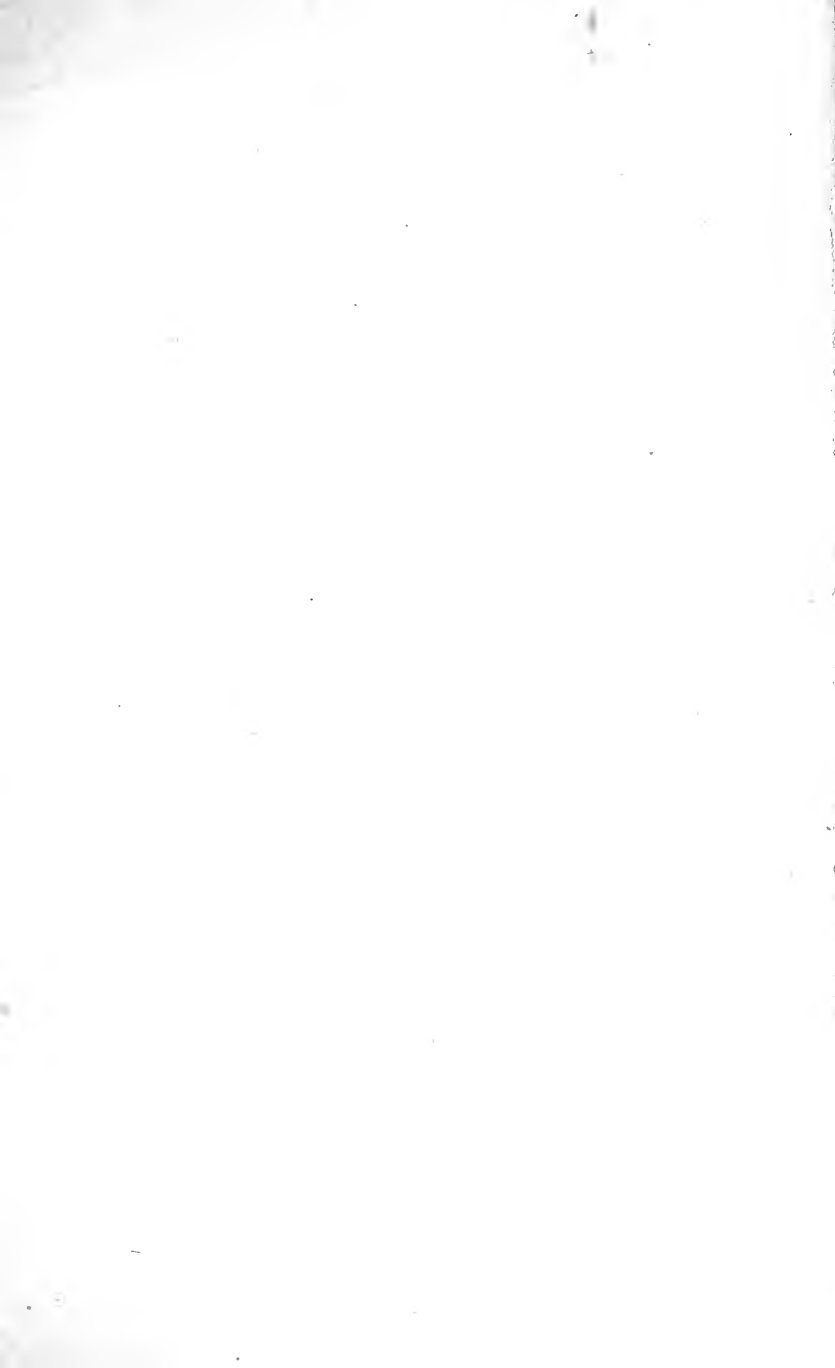
## CHAPTER XII

### OUR PRESENCE WITH THEM

ON March 21, 1918, began the German drive. It was not unexpected; all through the winter the thunder of guns shook the barracks and the ruins of the returning refugees, who crept ever nearer to the lines. From Cambrai, St. Quentin, and the Chemin des Dames came daily rumors of advance or of retreat. Overhead the German aeroplanes increased their activities. Each month the moon, rising to the full,

and lighting the earth with traitorous beauty, became more true to the name the poilus gave it, "La lune boche."

But no one anticipated the brutish strength of the German impact, least of all the British army, consolidating the new lines from Cambrai to St. Quentin which it had taken over from the French. It was just northeast of Ham, toward St. Quentin, that the British line gave way: Not two miles from this front was the outpost of a Friends' constructive unit; in like manner the Philadelphia Unit, only five miles back, was in full track of the German flood. At Rosières, at Nesle, at Grécourt, at Roye, the various relief units, isolated, without news except from the flying troops, placed all their resources of transport at the service of the civilian authorities and of the army, to evacuate the populace. With their protégés they kept just out of reach of the Uhlan cavalry. Down through Lassigny and Noyon swept once again the German army, confident of reaching Paris at last. Back





*Born in Flight from Lens, 1914.*



before it fell the relief workers; from Noyon to Compiègne, from Compiègne to Senlis, and from Soissons at length to Château-Thierry, where the great drive stopped.

Meantime from the Paris office, the head of the Bureau of Reconstruction and Relief hurried northward, to take charge of the situation so far as the Red Cross was concerned. With him went also the head of the refugee service. From this point until the armistice on November 11th, the history of the activities of the American Red Cross is a history of emergent relief. In all the territory where it was working out its experiments of constructive service, its work was swept away, and the people for whom it labored joined the already vast army of homeless refugees.

The loss of property, of the home built like an island of coral by the patient toil of hundreds of years above the vicissitudes of fortune—again we have no conception of what its loss meant to the peasant of France. It was attachment to his home, his property, that had

rooted him, immovable, in the path of the invader. He literally stayed until the last gun was fired. And even in his flight, behold him, encumbered with rabbits, chickens and pet canaries, or driving before him in the hurly-burly of bombardment, his sheep or his herd of cows. "I remember," said a French woman of letters already quoted, "a poor old woman (a refugee) whom I saw at the Gare du Nord; she had lost two sons at the front, suffered many miseries; she said to me: 'To suffer, to lose one's children, it is sad and it is hard, yet when one is at home, everything can be endured. But when one has to flee, to abandon his house and all that he has to the keeping of others, that is the worst of all.'"

Like the American Red Cross, every relief agency turned its hand to the immediate need not only of the refugees but of the soldiers. For there were in the path of the German advance at this time as yet no regular delegates of the military department of the

American Red Cross, so unexpected had been the catastrophe. The warehouses, hastily emptied, went to the supply of the British, French or American armies, and whatever could not be utilized in this way was burned. One reads of night rides of Red Cross delegates over shell-swept roads to bring bandages to a first-aid dressing station installed in one of these warehouses. Our own men, the soldiers of the immortal Rainbow Division, were supplied with hot drinks and food at a wayside canteen. Italian soldiers of the Garibaldi command, wounded and lying upon straw, were given sheets and bedding and bandages. The evacuation of Reims and of Châlons taxed the transportation service. A military hospital at Beauvais, so desperately emergent that no Red Cross nurses could be gotten up in time, was taken charge of by the Smith College Unit. In like manner, the Philadelphia Unit drove its cars as ambulances behind the French lines. Other units, such as the American Committee for Devas-

tated France, into which the civilian section of the American Fund for French Wounded had separated, were large enough to carry on both refugee and military aid. Soldiers' canteens, canteens for the harvesters who followed hard on the wake of the Allied advance, dispensaries, farm colonies, children's colonies and refugee committees in the unin-vaded departments to which their delegates had accompanied the refugees indicate the wide scope of their work.

The holding of the Germans at Château-Thierry was succeeded, as all the world knows, by the victorious offensive of Marshal Foch. Everything bent to the grim final effort, and the civilian service of the American Red Cross with it. On the one hand, it enlarged its personnel and its supplies in the departments of the interior to serve the refugees. On the other, it shared its personnel, its stores and its warehouses with the military service of the Red Cross for the soldiers. These latter were no longer exclusively the *poilus* for whom the

Red Cross had labored up to this time. They were overwhelmingly, overpoweringly our own. In the trenches, in the hospitals, marching along the road or lying under the wooden crosses beside it, one saw them everywhere, our boys. America had come at last into the war.

With her advent on the front, there was not only a change in emphasis between the department of military affairs and the department of civilian affairs of the Red Cross. There was a corresponding change of organization. Instead of the centralization of authority in Paris which had existed up to the time of the drive, authority was now centralized in the field under a zone commander who controlled the activities of both military and civilian officers therein. The zones of control, furthermore, corresponded to the army zones into which all France had been divided. Warehouse space was shared, or military and civilian warehouses complemented each other in the same region. There could be no sharp de-

markation between emergencies, civilian or military. It was a time to spare red tape and to meet the emergency. The health of children, the scourge of tuberculosis, merged into public health as affecting our army. The Children's Bureau was, therefore, detached from the Department of Civilian Relief, and placed in charge of the Medical and Surgical Department. Civilian sweaters and food supplies went for soldiers going into or coming out of action. Civilian units, such as the Smith College Unit and the various units of the American Fund for French Wounded ran military canteens, or took barge loads of wounded down the canals to the hospitals in Paris. Conversely, our soldiers became intensely interested in the needs of the civilians in the villages where they were billeted, inso-much that an entire new bureau of the Red Cross has been created to care for the orphans adopted by them.

The military development of the Red Cross, hastened by the catastrophes of the spring

campaign, was, nevertheless, in the minds of the War Council from the beginning; the work of the civilians deriving much of its value from the fact that we were not at first able to put our alliance to effective use on the battlefield. Once we took our place in the line, however, our prime duty, to the Allies as well as to ourselves, was to our own military needs. The change, sudden as it was, was logical. The service of the American Red Cross in the devastated area, far from being a loss, was of direct military value both during its prosecution and during the retreat. The large programme of rehabilitation in which it played its part, was as much a measure of war as the maneuvers of the army. Like them, it was subject to defeat.

In the words of the head of the Bureau of Reconstruction and Relief, just before he left Paris to take charge of the danger zone: "On the second day of the great German offensive, when the communiqués plainly showed the gravity of the situation, the possibility of a

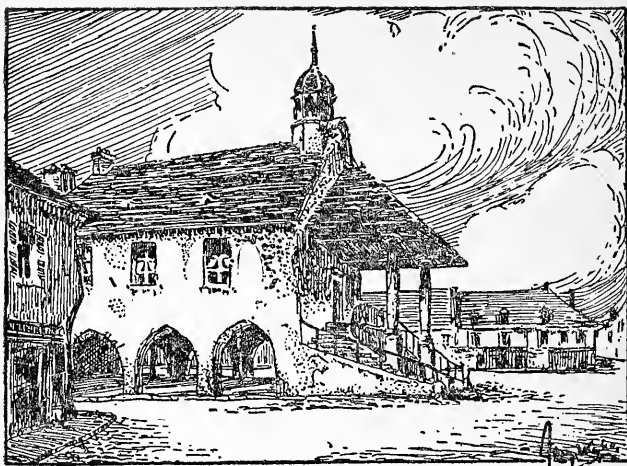
second invasion, and the destruction of our work in the devastated region, this Bureau wishes to go on record as absolutely convinced that it has done too little rather than too much and that it intends to continue the work, whatever menace may be ahead, so long as the French civilians are allowed near the lines and so long as they are in need. It is not too much to say that the work of this Bureau has been the main reliance of those civilians in at least three French departments. If the work is to be wrecked, we can only bow to the fortune of war, but we want no one to think that we regret the presence of civilians in the zone or our own presence there with them, or to think that we count as lost one cent of money or one ounce of effort expended in their behalf."

Our presence with them, that is what counted. The sous-préfet of Compiègne said to our delegate there: "I shall never forget that you stood by us when everyone else had left." In spite of the German drive, in spite



of military exigencies, to have kept in touch with his civilian co-laborers, such is the record of the American Red Cross delegate in the Oise. Most of the agencies there, dislodged and deflected as they were, are back in their old villages. Through the warehouse in Compiègne, the American Red Cross has been able to render them more valuable service this year than last. The vicissitudes, the losses shared together have made a stronger bond of union than could otherwise have been welded. New societies have come into the field. The American Red Cross itself at the first return of the civilians has opened a new service in a traveling dispensary.

The cardinal fact of the retreat, then, is this: That everywhere, in the Oise, in the Somme, and in the Aisne, where the lines of the armies were broken, the lines of the American Red Cross—those lines of mercy, of succor, of emergent service—held.



*Village Hall at Fismes.*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo. Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE ROAD TO VERDUN

**A**LMOST due east from Château-Thierry lies Châlons, and beyond Châlons, Verdun. Châlons is the departmental center of the Marne; Verdun, the frontier fortress of the Meuse, upon which for four years has pivoted the defense of the world. These two departments, shaken though they were by the German offensive of 1918, held their ground. In one of them, the Marne, the reconstruction

work begun by the English Friends in 1914 still continues. It affords that positive argument for the return to the soil of its tillers which many questioned after the disaster of the Somme.

Like her sister departments, the Marne had been devastated. Here in her valleys was fought the battle for the possession of Paris in the summer of 1914. On the southern side of the river, one sees everywhere the skeletons of once smiling villages; in the marshes of St. Gond, one hears, a whole squadron of German cavalry was sucked down to death. At Heiltz-le-Maurupt, the Prince of Hesse made his entry, and sacked and set the village on fire. A veteran of 1870 was shot as he stood in his doorway; the skirt of his old wife who stood beside him was riddled with bullets. At Bignicourt, one old man was left alone; his wife and two children having been suffocated in the cellar when the house was burned over their heads. Two women, a mother and her daughter, drowned themselves on hearing

that the Germans were about to take the village. The husband, asking permission to search for his wife's body, was put in prison. So run the tales in all the countryside. And, after the victory, only a few days after, the neighbors coming back to the ruins, took stock of their losses.

Of property, horses, farm animals and furniture, practically nothing remained. Of the families themselves, here are typical records: A mother and five children, one son dead, two others at the front; a widow seventy-four years old, her husband killed by the Germans, one son at the front; a spinster, seventy-two years old, her sister dead of the hardships suffered in the course of her flight at the time of the battle; a young girl, her father and mother having died of heart failure at the time of the bombardment; a mother, her two sons mobilized and one of them wounded; a retired teacher, aged seventy-two, and his aged wife, without resource.

Yet in these villages, as elsewhere, the in-

habitants shared the feeling of the old woman of whom René Benjamin writes in "Un Pauvre Village," \*—any village, anywhere in devastated France, as he explains. She is returning with her little granddaughter. "The little girl asked:

"'Is it much further, grandmother?'

"And she, she knew that it was *there*, and she recognized nothing.

"The church, the road, the gardens, the houses, the trembling poplars, the pond which mark a bright spot in the valley—all dead, vanished, all fallen, overturned, destroyed.—Is it far? Alas, we are here! . . . This is her country, her life. It is here that she passed long days, this old woman, here where lie all the thoughts of her poor head, all visions, desires, her past, her memory. And all is sacked, pillaged, torn to pieces! Massacre and death; she, herself, dying, it seems; but her first word does not portray her own suffering; she thinks still of her old and wretched

\* G. Weil, Publisher, Paris.

friend, this village which is no more than a shapeless, miserable heap, and in a voice heavy with the grief of the aged who realize all the sufferings of life, she groans only:

‘Oh! . . . *Mon Dieu!* . . . The poor thing!’”

It was the privilege of the English Friends to come into the Marne only two months after the battle of the Marne had been won. From the Marne, they extended their work into the Meuse. Both are agricultural departments, of rolling hills and valleys, vines and grassy meadows, watered by the two historic rivers which have given them their respective names. In both, the wounds of the invasion were still fresh. If one recalls reading, in far-away America, the course of the battles so recently fought here; the headlines of Armageddon, the horror that seemed to envelop even our peaceful lives, he has some faint conception of the emotional as well as the physical overwhelming of the first days of the war. The Friends shared this emotion.

From the moment when they threw open their meeting house at Folkestone to the first Belgian refugees, their consuming desire has been to help; and their plan is to help not masses, but individuals. Out of this fact comes one of the strange contrasts of the war. They, living with the peasants, becoming "Villagers of the Villages," could doubtless recount more German atrocities than any other group of social workers in France. They, pacifists, conscientious objectors, haters of all war, could equally gather the proofs for the statement that home service, next to fighting itself, is the service of greatest value in winning the war. They, who knew every family for a hundred and fifty miles in the territory from Esternay to Verdun, could tell you that there is practically not one but has husband, sons, or brothers at the front. Yet they have performed their service from an ideal and spiritual motive. They have seen only the misfortunes; they have pitied, but they have not judged.

At the time of the arrival of the American Red Cross in France, there were already working in the Marne and the Meuse about a hundred and fifty of these English Friends. On the same ship with the Red Cross Commissioner, there sailed from America two representatives of the American Friends desirous of effecting a working agreement whereby they too might work in France. This plan was welcomed not only by the English Friends, but by the American Red Cross, and large funds were placed at its disposal. Up to November 11, 1918, this arrangement had resulted in an increase of the Friends' personnel from 150 to between 500 and 600, half of whom are Americans. The direct appropriations of the American Red Cross, keeping pace with this increase in numbers, have supplied during this period half of the entire money expended.

The American Friends, on the other hand, have held themselves in readiness to do any work that the Red Cross required of them.



They have put up barracks for hospitals, erected shelters for workers, done expert service such as running the saw mill at Noyon, and gathering in the harvests last summer on the second battlefield of the Marne. But the prime end for which the Red Cross designed the Friends' Units—agricultural reconstruction—was hopelessly deferred by the sinister spring of 1917. They were therefore free to collaborate entirely with their predecessors, the English group. The activities in which these latter engage are divided, like those of the Red Cross itself, into service for refugees from the devastated area, and those remaining in it or returning to it. Besides, they have a very important branch unlike anything undertaken by any other relief agency, the manufacture of demountable houses, already mentioned.

In the Meuse, and in the Marne, the activities of the Friends are five in number: Reconstruction, agriculture, medical aid, transport, economic relief. Of these, reconstruc-

tion and agriculture have been the big programme. By the end of 1916, 500 houses had already been put up or repaired. This practically finished the building undertaken for small holders in these two departments, until the lines should move again. But there remained a very interesting experiment which was carried out. Not all the farmers, naturally, owned their land. There were shepherds, farriers, and small dependents of larger holdings. Failing to own land, no one was entitled to a house. Yet his services, or those of his wife, were he absent, were most valuable at a time when farm labor was almost impossible to obtain. The Friends therefore secured two grants of waste land, and upon them erected two model villages of perhaps thirty houses each for landless refugees. The houses themselves are two-room, three-room, or four-room dwellings of red brick with red tile roofs. Each has its door-yard of flowers, its neat gate and wicket fence. The sidewalk is bordered by newly set trees; the drainage

system is complete, and the life of the pigmy village centers around a steeple-roofed well.

Unlike building, agriculture is perennial. The Friends had five establishments in the Marne and Meuse, with a permanent force of twenty-one men. In the sector about Sermaize, which was the largest center for all kinds of relief, two hundred and thirty acres were plowed last year, half of which were also harrowed and sown. One hundred machines, mostly mowers and binders, were loaned out to the farmers and kept track of; five hundred machines in all had been repaired. Hay was mowed, grain was cut, and nine hundred and three tons of it were threshed. Besides, the farms were stocked for breeding rabbits, chickens, sheep and goats.

Next to agriculture, in the line of economic relief, are the industries for women in which the Friends excel. At Bar-le-Duc, they have availed themselves of an industry long established in the region; white embroidery of

linen and underwear. But this requires skilled workers. There was imperative need at Sermaize of a simpler craft, which should occupy the time and the thought of the homeless refugees crowded into the once fashionable bathing casino there. Before shelters could be built for them, these unfortunates inhabited a human bee-hive, a village of three hundred souls, where each family possessed only a cubicle, often without light, and practically without air. As rapidly as possible, the worst features of this overcrowding were remedied and eventually the families were reinstated in homes of their own. But they comprised a population of field workers or factory hands, unaccustomed to the use of the needle. For them, a special form of embroidery in colored wools on linen—old linen such as many of them still possessed—was designed. To these industries has been added straw plaiting. All are flourishing, the products being sold in the fashionable Parisian stores.

Transport, indispensable as it is, resolves itself always into terms of machines, chauffeurs, and gasoline. The American Red Cross augmented this service, doubtless. But its chief contribution to the Friends has been that of medical relief. The English Friends had already established one maternity hospital, one children's hospital, three convalescent homes, and district nursing. In conjunction with the Children's Bureau and later with the Medical Department, the American Red Cross has strengthened all this work by the loan of doctors, and by the increased funds available. Two of the most important additions were dental clinics and a surgical hospital.

The latter, beginning with a semi-dismantled country house at Sermaize, grew into a plant accommodating sixty patients, with its own electric lighting, its baths, its white operating room, and its clean wards. Thirty nurses and nurses' aids cared for the patients, who came from a radius of thirty miles around. They were not charity patients, by any

means; one might be the wife of a French colonel, another the daughter of a sous-préfet, and others the wives and the children of the soldiers or the aged parents they had left. There was absolutely no other surgeon in the district, no other civilian hospital. All were treated free of charge.

Except for the warehouse of the Red Cross established at Châlons in April, 1918, and for the regular relief work of the department, there were, up to the time of the armistice, no other considerable agencies working on the spot in the Marne. There was, however, one that is interesting because it represents the Protestants of France, under the name of the Comité Protestant d'Entr'Aide. In the hamlet of Heiltz-le-Maurupt, on the Marne battle line, was a Protestant church and in the village were thirty families of that faith, descendants of the Huguenots, who lost all they possessed. The Friends put up in this village the shelters for which the Entr'Aide supplied the furnishings. In like manner, the Friends

have used the supplies of the Bon Gîte and the Renaissance du Foyer:

It would be extremely interesting to take up in detail the cooperation of our warehouse at Châlons with the prefecture of the Marne. Like Amiens, Châlons is a gateway for refugees, and, as at Amiens, a careful plan has been worked out for their relief. In so far as this plan supplements the relief work of the Friends and of the Red Cross, it has a place here. The plan is that of M. Nicaud, departmental inspector of public assistance, and embraces both transient refugees and the inhabitants of the Marne who are in straits owing to the war. M. Nicaud acts for the Departmental Commission called into being by the Ministry of the Interior in August, 1917. He is responsible to the préfet of the Marne. Like so many of the departmental officials of France, he is not a native of the department himself, but was appointed only a year before the outbreak of the war. In the room adjoining his office, the walls are lined

with open files. Here are the records of the *éprouvés* (sufferers), it may be from Belgium, from the Nord, or from the Marne itself. They represent requests for aid, investigations by the mayor of the commune in which the applicant resides, and the amount of aid given.

Up to the 20th of November, 1918, 28,922 families or 83,000 persons had been given assistance. But this assistance is not given, except in the case of non-residents, in cash. M. Nicaud—like most of the French officials—is a firm believer in preserving the independence of the recipient. The latter is presented with an order for the amount covering his immediate needs, redeemable at his own local merchant's, or at a depot established by the State. Into this scheme of relief, both the American Red Cross and the Friends have come tentatively, the Red Cross having donated a monthly stipend and large supplies, and the Friends, under the prefecture, having established a distributing depot of these supplies at Châlons against the orders of M. Ni-



caud. Naturally, however, the subsidies for the prefectorial plan come largely from the government, and as yet private agencies in the Marne have not worked out the complete coordination with the prefecture which M. Nicaud hopes to effect.

The Meuse adjoins the Marne without natural barriers. One of the English Friends describes it as "comparatively poor and almost entirely agricultural. The men having been drawn away by the war, there is no one left to think for them. The depression in these villages is very pitiful." This was in 1915. In 1916, the Meuse, quiescent since the onslaught of 1914, sprang into terrible glory, in the defense of Verdun. While the cannon of Fort Vaux and Fort Douaumont thundered, while overhead the German shells and bombs were being hurled, village women by the roadside broke stone to keep in repair the vital road that night and day fed the defense. On that road depended Verdun, cut off from all other means of communica-

tion, and on Verdun, hung France. Fifteen miles, at one time, was the narrow space that separated the German armies on either side of the road. Thousands of lives were poured out to save it.

There, among the heroic villages, another organization beside the Friends came in October, 1916,—the Villages Libérés. It established an outpost in charge of a nurse, Mlle. Sirodot, who was for many years interested in an orphanage in Brittany. The little center grew; two other volunteers came to act as nurses, and by the autumn of 1918, there were sixty villages all up and down the road in their care. Not only nursing, but material aid was given, though here again the Villages Libérés put into practice their conviction that the recipients should pay something, be it ever so little, for the objects accorded them. The greatest need of the two ladies in charge of the district was transportation, and this, with a chauffeur, the Red Cross supplied. They also gave liberally of their

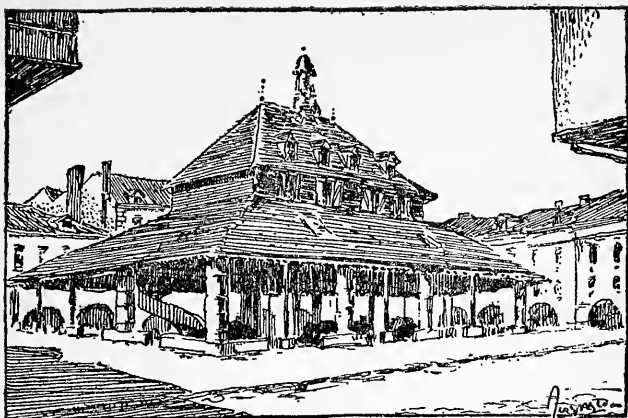
stores and for some time had their civilian headquarters in the grounds of the château which served as headquarters for the Villages Libérés also at Rosnes.

With the Villages Libérés, and later with the Children's Bureau of the Red Cross, worked also a group of the American Fund for French Wounded, establishing dispensaries for the civilians. But, like the Red Cross itself, it quickly turned to the care of our own wounded in the terrible fighting of the Argonne.

The road to Verdun! There might honk the gray Ford of the Friend's Unit, unabashed; there through the mud walked the ladies of the Villages Libérés, in their blue uniforms and white banded, floating veils; there crashed and rumbled the French army camions, hundreds of them, driven by slant-eyed Annamites; there at a crossroad stood the Yankee M. P., holding up traffic at its peril; there the soldiers of the world, it seemed, marched by. Our ambulance boys, all during the siege of 1916, flashed up and down it, our troops in

khaki have traveled it; our dead are laid to rest on the hillsides that overlook it, winding up to Verdun.

But that was before the armistice. On the night of November 11, 1918, the moon, no longer a Boche moon, shone on the long white road and on the shattered villages. For the first time in four years they twinkled with lights.



*Market at Montréjeau (Comminges).*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo. Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PREFECT OF THE FRONTIER

**B**OUNDING the Meuse on the northeast, a buffer between the French fortress of Verdun and the German fortress of Metz, lies the Department of the Meurthe and Moselle, anciently known as Lorraine. From the time of the Romans, when these marches were peopled by tribes of the Belgæ, this has been a turbulent frontier. Here in the ninth century, as in the nineteenth, were fought the battle against German aggression which de-

terminated the existence of France as a nation, cemented by the treaty of Verdun. So ancient has been the formal feud between the two races. Civil wars have engaged the province, in which figure the Bishops of Toul, the Dukes of Lorraine and of Bar, and that arch-enemy of all feudal princes, the King—whoever he might be—of France. Margaret of Anjou, Queen of England in the wars of the Roses, was born at Pont-à-Mousson, the ruins of which were held at the time of the armistice by Southern colored troops. Nomeny, the proud seat of Lorraine, was the birthplace of another princess who became a queen of France. To-day Nomeny is one of the thousands of villages wantonly destroyed by Germany. But in spite of royal alliances, Lorraine itself never came under the crown of France until a few years before the French revolution. Nor had she been long a state of the Empire, when she was cut in two, and her northern half ceded, in 1872, to Germany. North of the Moselle, converted into an ever-

present menace at Strasbourg and Metz, lay the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.

It is not strange that the Meurthe and Moselle can boast many an admiral and marshal of France. At Toul and at Nancy were situated those military schools which trained year after year the picked troops of the Division of Iron, the men who, relying on the inviolable neutrality of Belgium, thought to withstand between Verdun and Belfort the first assaults of their ancient enemy, Germany. As a matter of fact they did so withstand them in the fall of 1914. But the glory of that victory was swallowed up in the greater glory of the Marne.

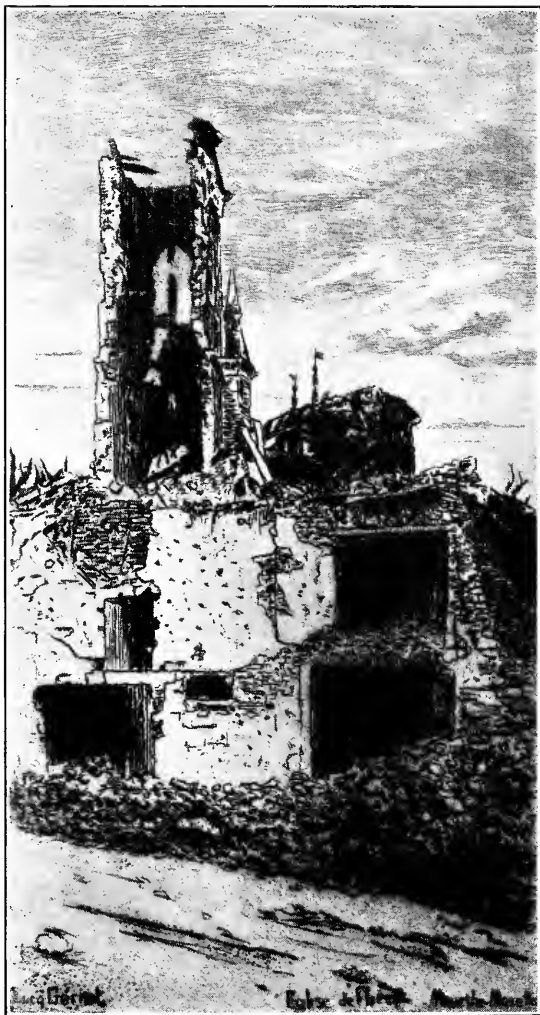
As the German troops swept ever nearer through Nomeny to the west, and through Lunéville and Gerbévillers to the east, Nancy knew that her fate in the combined attack rested on the semicircle of wooded hills about her known as Le Grand Couronné de Nancy (the Great Crown of Nancy) and held by her troops. It is told how the artillery on one of

these heights fell short of ammunition. The guns fired their last shot; the Germans were advancing. Nothing remained but to destroy the guns and retreat. The order was given. The crew of one gun received it with tears in their eyes. "My captain," they said, "Our gun has been a good gun. Before we destroy it, may we not decorate it?" The captain assented. The soldiers gathered flowers from the fields and branches from the woods; they made a flowery chariot of their well-loved companion in arms, the gun. But the captain stood watching the enemy, field glass to eye. Suddenly he saw the advancing columns wheel, turn and file away. He waited, still watching. Then the truth dawned on him. "The Germans are falling back," he cried, "the battle is won." Such is the legend of the gun that saved Nancy, as beautiful a legend as those King Stanislas caused to be wrought in the city's golden gates.

In the city itself, during these terrible days, there was a spirit as unconscious, as heroic,







*Church of Flirey, Meurthe-Moselle.*

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as that of its defenders. It was due in a great measure to the new préfet who had come to Nancy only a month before. M. Léon Mirman had been successively professor of mathematics at the Lyceum of Reims, deputy, and director of public aid in the Ministry of the Interior. At the outbreak of the war, he had asked to be sent to a point of danger. The department of the Meurthe and Moselle was given to him. He came to Nancy with his wife and his family, saying to his new neighbors in his first proclamation: "I bring you that which, next to my country, I cherish most, my wife and my six children who will be proud to share your trials, to toil with you in your labors, and to unite themselves to your hope."

From the summer of 1914 to the summer of 1918, Nancy suffered bombardment every month, sometimes every week, and during the full moons—for the felon aviators of Germany preferred its light—night after night. It shares with Dunkerque and Reims the dis-

tion of being the most bombed city of France. Not only was the city bombed, but the surrounding country, until Nancy was full of refugees. At the head of the committee to care for them was, of course, the Préfet, and on it served the Mayor and the Bishop of Nancy. An asylum for these unfortunates was fitted up, and divided into corridors, each bearing the name of the village of the refugees. Trade schools were opened for the children. Industries were fostered. Huge underground refuges were built. Mme. Mirman and her older daughters were no less keen to help than the Préfet. In fact the trade school was Mme. Mirman's particular charge.

When the English Friends, so near the scene of these continued disasters, inquired in 1915 what they could do to help, they were met by the courteous reply that Nancy, being a very wealthy city, was proud to take care of its own. Nevertheless, they had for a time a relief station there. In the summer of 1917, however, there came a plea in the form of a

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telegram from M. Mirman himself to the American Fund for French Wounded, asking help for four hundred and fifty children, evacuated from neighboring villages on account of the German gas attacks. These children, ranging from one year to nine, were too young to wear gas masks. They were without fathers, because the fathers had been mobilized. They were without mothers, because the mothers must remain at their posts of danger to cultivate the fields.

The American Red Cross, as Mrs. Lathrop of the American Fund for French Wounded knew, was looking for work. She herself could supply the nurses, the transportation, and the medical supplies, but not the doctor. She laid the case before the American Red Cross. As a result, the Children's Bureau of the latter started the next day the first Red Cross work for civilians in France. The asylum itself was a former military barracks of ten buildings capable of housing eight hundred patients, situated on a hill a mile from the old, walled

city of Toul. The prefecture and the army, cooperating, gave the light, the coal, the water supply, food, domestic labor and a squad of soldiers, beds and bedding and transportation of supplies. The Red Cross supplemented this help with a unit of six American Friends to install sanitary equipment, with milk and delicacies for the children, games and, above all, a doctor, a dentist and a director of play. At Toul then began the active cooperation between the American Red Cross and the American Fund for French Wounded which continued until January, 1919. From Toul their work spread, until there were twenty-six dispensaries for children opened under the Red Cross director designated Directeur des Secours Civils aux Enfants for the department of the Meurthe and Moselle.

But the story of the dispensaries in the Meurthe and Moselle as a whole belongs to the Children's Bureau, which, in the Zone reorganization of the Red Cross, passed from the Department of General Relief to the

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Medical Department. It belongs not so much to an area of devastation as to one overstrained by the necessity of the war production, not only of food, but of ammunition. Gas attacks, bombs, the shortage of labor which caused women to take the places of men in industry, the overcrowding of refugees, these were the conditions alleviated by the Children's Bureau in its refuge at Toul, in its city dispensaries and its hospitals and crèches established in connection with munition plants such as Foug. True, there was the ruined city of Lunéville, there was Gerbévillers, which will ever be famous for Sœur Julie and her wounded, there was Pont-à-Mousson, where even last summer the nurses who served the dispensary ran across the bridge in single file so as not to be picked off by the German gunners, there was Pompey, with its wrecked and silent factories, and a dozen more that one might name. Nevertheless, the work of the American Red Cross was primarily one of public health, supplementing M. Mirman

in his programme of economic administration.

In like manner, the American Red Cross warehouse and transportation service, opened in January, 1918, was designed to meet the emergent needs of the refugees flocking into Nancy, to stock the soup kitchens, to disburse supplies for war orphans or for poor relief, and to furnish men and transport for the all too-frequent emergencies of bombardment. Ambulance service, the evacuation of the maternity hospital of Nancy to Toul, and finally, their share in the wholesale evacuation of Nancy itself resulting from ever fiercer air raids in February and March, 1918, such were the emergent tasks which fell to the Red Cross personnel.

Meantime at the Prefecture, three broad lines of service were perfected; (1) the care of refugees already noted, (2) the encouragement of agriculture, with attendant reconstruction, (3) and, above all, by all these means the encouragement of the people whom



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M. Mirman had come to govern. In spite of the fact that the greater part of his department was uninvaded, it had lost to the Germans the main source of its industry in losing the Basin of Briey. There were the iron mines which had supplied its foundries, the most considerable in France. In like manner it had lost its deposits of salt and of potash. Its industries were further dislocated by lack of coal usually imported through Germany. It was cut off from the west of France by the loop of German armies almost surrounding Verdun. The front, with all its horrors of wounded, its gas attacks, its constant anxieties, lay not fifteen miles from the capital, which was subjected to both bombardment and raids. And from the front, far into the interior, over peaceful fields and vineyards, over open cities, over munitions factories, or over rail heads as the case might be, the air squadrons of the Germans dropped impartially their bombs.

Yet under these terrible conditions the

munitions of war must be forged. That the women may till the fields, the children must be placed in safety. "The tiller of the soil, in laboring for the communes labors also for France." "The victory does not depend solely on military action; the civilians must strive on their part to guard against the economic disasters of which the war is the cause." "French valor should affirm itself in work, as it does in arms."\* Such were the appeals which M. Mirman addressed to his fellow citizens. But he gave them more than words; he distributed seeds in the devastated communes, and built and repaired hundreds of houses in the one hundred and thirty-four communes retrieved from the Germans. He loved the refugees, particularly the children. These latter do not all belong by any means to his asylums, in Nancy or in Toul. At Pompey, in all the towns lying at the mouth of the mines, the foundries of peace times turned to the manufactures of war. Night and day

\* Félix Rocquain: Un Grand Préfet. La Revue Hebdomadaire.

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they ran, and the tall chimneys belching fire were a flaunting target for German bombs. So it came about that the poor houses left in these villages stood empty, and every night a sad procession moved down to some unworked shaft, to spend the night in its shelter. And this went on, not for a week, or a month, or a year, but in some cases for four years. Children were born and lived and died—for the mortality was high—without knowing any other home.

Such children as these were reached by the American Red Cross and the American Fund for French Wounded dispensaries; bright children, pathetic children, oftentimes war-orphaned children whom kind neighbors took in. And it was the care of the children that touched as nothing else could, M. Mirman's heart. Just as he had entrusted his own children to the protection of the French army, he entrusted these other children of his larger family to the American Red Cross.

War is a wastrel. In the spring of 1918, the

refugee work at Nancy was swept away. By order of the army, Nancy was evacuated of all her useless and alien population. The refugees had to leave the community center where they had experienced so much of kindness and of practical encouragement. Later, a second blow fell on M. Mirman in a second evacuation, that of the asylum at Toul. Not the enemy, but the latest of their Allies, caused this unexpected result. Our army, coming into the firing line in Lorraine, took the children's asylum as a hospital. The dénouement was sudden and unexpected. M. Mirman, who had gone himself to the mothers of these children to assure them that he would be personally responsible for them, had no time to gain their consent to a second removal. He assumed the responsibility, and sent them, as he had the first convoys, on a special train to a place of safety outside the fighting zone.

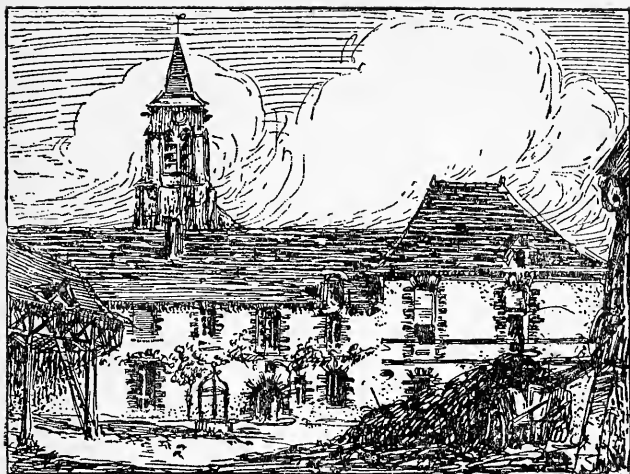
But the dispensaries, the hospitals and the crèches, attached to the factory centers, and

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the Nancy warehouse continued to extend help to the civilians of the Meurthe and Moselle. The aerial bombardments, increasing up to the time of the armistice, made this service of exceptional value. The preparation for the great offensive against Metz, to have been launched by us and by the French, on November 11th, on the other hand, made it increasingly difficult. Wholesale evacuations from the zone of operation to the north of Nancy added to the stream of refugees departing from the city itself. It was the aim of the prefecture to outfit each of these refugees with clothing and with food for the journey. The resources of the Nancy warehouse were placed at the disposal of Mme. Mirman and a committee of charitable ladies, for this end, as well as for all the wartime charities which they directed. Mme. Massiet, wife of General Massiet, writes of this: "the assistance in food and clothing in these days of restricted supplies and expensive living has rendered us a service the importance of

which is above anything which we can express."

On the heights of Château-Thierry, before the St. Mihiel salient, in the Argonne Forest, and on the front of Nancy, which commanded Metz, the American Army was given by the French its posts of honor. In Lorraine fell the first of our army for France. The department of the Meurthe and Moselle has commemorated their sacrifice by a monument emblazoned with the double cross of Lorraine. Our men of that advance division wear the emblem of Lorraine upon their shoulders. No less precious a symbol of the *entente cordiale*, of appreciation of American effort, will rise in the Meurthe and Moselle, in commemoration of the American Red Cross. It will be a living memorial, a trade school, founded by M. Mirman from money given him by the Red Cross to use in any way he saw fit, for the children of Lorraine.



*Saint Cyr (near Dourdan).*

*Réflexions et Croquis sur l'Architecture au Pays de France: Georges Wybo, Hachette et Cie., Paris.*

## CHAPTER XV

### THE FLAGS OF VICTORY

WITH the proclaiming of the armistice, on November 11, 1918, the second phase of the effort of the American Red Cross for civilians drew to an end. The merging of the military and civilian branches made necessary at the time of the retreat, and perfected in the system of Zone management during the stupendous Allied offensive of the early autumn,

suddenly lost its reason for being. The concentration of supplies, of energy, of purpose in the soldier, and particularly in the American soldier, relaxed. The husbanding of resources against a winter in the trenches, the restrictions placed upon civilian buying, the measuring of tonnage by the needs of the army, the impossibility of constructive planning, all these uncertainties vanished overnight.

In their place was presented a problem quite as stupendous: the devastation and the refugee. "In the steeples of the liberated villages," writes Eduard Helsey in *Le Journal*, January 2, 1919, "the flags of victory are commencing to be displayed. To the first rejoicing has succeeded little by little a joy more thoughtful which forces consideration of the actual realities. It is not sufficient to be victorious, it is also necessary to live.

"In the regions devastated by the enemy, there is for our unfortunate compatriots a problem so acute as to border on tragedy.



“Before stating the results of my investigation as to the sufferings of those to whom our soldiers have given their freedom, I wish to touch upon what is being done for them.

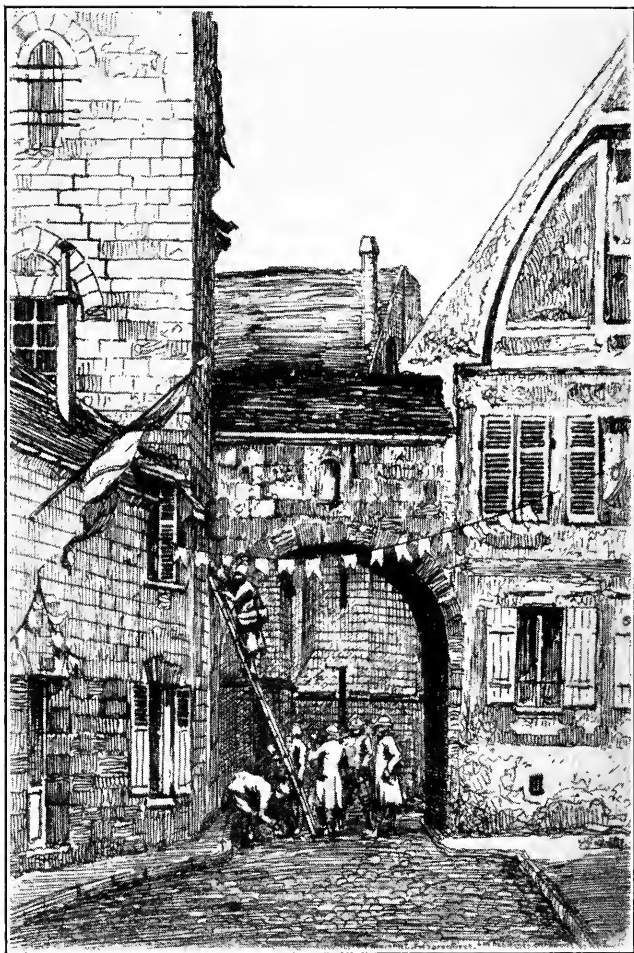
“We must state the simple truth. All of those upon whom falls the responsibility of dealing with this situation have a keen understanding of their duty, so clear and so imperative. The minister in charge, M. Lebrun, his assistants, the heads of departments, the préfets, the generous people organized into societies to render assistance—every one is working without sparing himself. Every one is putting his whole heart and soul into this effort. But the enormity of the task surpasses the capacity of the best intentions; and those who are devoting themselves to this work of rehabilitation of the devastated regions, are the first to recognize and to proclaim that the needs are out of all proportion to the results obtained.

“Think that in the single department of the Nord, so completely ‘sabotaged’ by the war,

it is necessary to provide the means of life for 1,200,000 inhabitants! And this figure does not cease to mount. Every day from 3000 to 5000 exiles are returning. A great number are returning through Valenciennes, arriving from Belgium or Germany, to which countries they had been deported. In this single department of the Nord can be counted fifty-seven communes (among which are several large cities), and of these 40 per cent of all the real property has been destroyed. In thirty-two of these communes from 40 to 90 per cent of the houses have been shattered by cannon, and in fifty-nine communes not one building in ten is standing. To sum up, half of the department is uninhabitable, and the rest has been totally laid bare. At Cambrai, Douai, and at Valenciennes, there was no longer when the Germans left, linen, bedding, cooking nor other utensils. There was *nothing*.

"There is no one to blame for the present situation but the Germans. Yes. But we





*Telegraph Corps Putting up Wires, Noyon.*

*Après le Recul Allemand, Mars 1917. Noyon, Guiscard, Ham: Armand Guéritte. Vernant & Dolle, Imprimeurs, Paris.*

are now in the winter season and during this temporary period from which there is no escape, hundreds of thousands of French, who have already suffered the anguish and torture of the Boche oppression, are still suffering cruelly. This is because it is much easier to destroy than to rebuild, and peace does not, any more than war, take place in a day.

“Two or three million poor people are living in these liberated regions, either because they did not wish to flee before the invader or because they have again returned to their homes at the earliest opportunity. There is actually nothing more urgent for France than to assure these people the means to live.

“What are they doing? What are they eating? How are they dressed? Where are they sleeping? How are they spending their days and their nights? What do they need?

“It was to investigate at first hand, to register the exact facts that I undertook a tour through the martyred towns, through the great cities so long shut out from French

life, through the villages laid waste, where I have seen our soldiers fight.

“Haubourdin, Halluin, Gondecourt, Crève-cœur, Courcelles, Péronne, Bapaume, these are names of combats and of victories. It is necessary to-day to give new and peaceful battles against misery and hunger.”

There remained to be determined the relation of the American Red Cross to this appalling situation. It called for emergency action quick and far reaching to be effective. But that very fact necessitated the closest cooperation of the American Red Cross with the Government on whom must fall not only the crushing need of the moment, but the plan for the economic reconstruction of the six thousand square miles of devastated France. Plans of reconstruction and of agriculture, worked out by the American Red Cross in the days when the German retreat was looked on as a gradual process, assumed insignificant proportions in the face of the sudden liberation of the entire occupied territory. Cities

reduced to rubble, miles of soil empoisoned by gas, planted with shells and barbed wire, blasted as by a volcanic eruption,—this was the concern of governments. Above all, France felt, it was the concern of Germany. As a French soldier said on viewing the devastation reconquered, “After all, only the ruins are German, the soil is French!” *The ruins are German*, and she will pay.

While these matters on which hang peace or war are being discussed by the envoys of all the world, the American Red Cross has set itself to carry out the duty, assigned it by the French government, of emergent relief. It is doing this, not in its own way, but in the way approved and determined by that government. This is, so far as the main plan is concerned, a return to the warehouse scheme of the Belgian Relief Commission. Six huge warehouses have been established in Northern France; one at Verdun, one at Châlons, one at Mézières, one at Laon, one at Amiens, and one at Lille. Each serves a defined area;

that of Verdun the Meuse, the Meurthe and Moselle, and the Vosges, that of Châlons the Marne, that of Mézières the Ardennes, that of Laon the Aisne, that of Amiens the Somme and the Oïse, that of Lille the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais. They have each a delegate, a staff, and above all, a strong transport service; for in the devastated area proper railroads no longer exist, nor tramways, nor busses, nor conveyances of any kind—it might almost be said, nor roads. The delegates of these warehouses are responsible to a Field Director, whose central office is in Paris, and he, in turn, is responsible to the Director of General Relief. The capacity of the warehouses, and the volume of work contemplated, may be judged by the fact that the first consignment shipped to Lille comprised one hundred carloads. Fortunately army supplies and refugee supplies stored in the interior could be systematically diverted to this use.

There was already operating in Northern France another intensely American agency,



the Hoover or Belgian Relief Commission, latterly 'called the Interallied Food Commission. From Belgium as far as the former German lines, they had their old territory divided into districts and committees, centering about their warehouses. The Interallied Food Commission and the American Red Cross have, therefore, combined in a working agreement whereby the American Red Cross warehouses in France carry no stock of food, relying on the stocks of the Commission of Relief for Belgium, but on the other hand supplement the Food Commission in Belgium proper by Red Cross warehouses stored with other necessities. Three such warehouses have been established there.

Meantime, another agency has been invited by the French authorities into the situation; the Children's Bureau of the American Red Cross itself. Dr. A. Calmette, the medical inspector for the liberated regions of the Service de Santé, sent in January the following appeal:

“In the cities of Northern France that have been devastated by the German armies, the working population has suffered much more than the country people from insufficient food. As a result the children, especially from eight to sixteen years old, have been stunted in their growth.

“Physicians are much preoccupied over this condition which puts the coming race in jeopardy.

“The authorities concentrating all their powers on economic reconstruction are not now in a position to recognize all the importance of this question.

“It is extremely to be wished that the American Red Cross, which has made such generous efforts on behalf of the refugees from the invaded districts, should see its way to organizing a work for the relief of the youth of the liberated cities. This could be done by establishing school canteens, where for an entire year each child could obtain a substantial meal.

“The cities of the north of France devastated or destroyed by the German army, call with all their heart on the American Red Cross for their assistance and beg them not to abandon them.”

In accordance with this all too evident need, the warehouse plan of the Red Cross was modified to include stores of supplementary food for children, and canteen centers are in process of organization by the Children's Bureau in connection with both Red Cross and Allied Food Commission warehouses. Dispensaries are not deemed necessary on account of the return to their practices of mobilized physicians, and of the able direction of the Service de Santé. In fact, nearly all the Children's Bureau dispensaries which have heretofore worked in the devastated area have been closed for these reasons.

Besides the American Red Cross and the Interallied Food Commission, there are hundreds of private agencies equipped for emergency relief and for reconstruction, which are already

in the field. Of American organizations, for instance, all those who had posts in the north prior to the German drive have returned. In addition, college units such as the Barnard Unit and the Vassar Unit, are at work, one in the Nord, and the other at Verdun; and it is universally true that units which in war-time were hospital units, have taken up emergent relief. The organization carrying the largest programme is that of the Friends with a personnel of six hundred. The next in size is the American Committee for Devastated France in the Aisne.

There are British organizations, notably the Comité Britannique of the French Red Cross. There are the host of French agencies, headed by the Comité du Secours National and the three branches of the French Red Cross. The former functions as usual, for the most part indirectly by subsidizing departmental and other agencies; the latter has an extensive field and a numerous personnel drawn from its nurses. There are the many smaller societies,

who with the French Red Cross, have held in reserve their energy and their supplies for just this moment of greatest need. The clothing made for four years in the women's workrooms, the accumulated furniture, the kitchen utensils,—all are being distributed now. There are the owners of estates who return to encourage their villagers, their hands full of gifts. There are agricultural societies such as the Aide Immédiate aux Agriculteurs, whose name explains its purpose, and village planning and reconstruction societies, such as the Village Reconstitué, and the Renaissance des Cités. In the hands of the latter, the Red Cross has placed all the expert studies on the problem of reconstruction upon which it has been engaged for two years.

This network of private effort, of whatever nationality, exists with the authorization and under the restriction of the French government. To this end a new ministry was created last autumn, styled the Ministère du Blocus et des Régions Libérées. As in war-

time by the army, so now by the ministry the sectors of each of these societies are given out. Non-partisan departmental committees and the representative of the ministry in each department oversee and control to a certain extent the private activities and coordinate them with the colossal plans of the government.\*

It is with special departmental committees that the American Red Cross delegates work. They themselves do no individual family relief work, but in each section distribute through an agency already established, and approved by the aforesaid committee, at whose head, *ex officio*, is the *préfet* himself.

The warehousing and disbursing plan thus adopted by the American Red Cross has cut off automatically not only its own direct relief work, but special services and subsidies formerly granted by the Red Cross to cooperating agencies, such as the American Friends'

\* See Appendix.

Unit, the American Fund for French Wounded, the American Committee for Devastated France, and the college units recruited under the Red Cross. The chief necessity and advantage of such an arrangement no longer existed. With the signing of the armistice transportation had become unrestricted. With the practical end of the war, the wartime centralization of American effort in the Red Cross became untenable. The purpose of the organization could no longer be said to be the winning of the war. Its civilian activities resumed their normal scope, that of an agency of emergent relief. On February 28, 1919, the War Council of the American Red Cross was dissolved.

It is too early to appraise the effort of the American Red Cross for the civilians of France. A hundred and fifty years after Lafayette, France has garnered the harvest of goodwill, of deep obligation, which he sowed in the heart of America. In like manner, in the hearts of her people, and especially in the te-

nacious memories of her peasant soldiers, the American Red Cross would most desire to be remembered, not for its accomplishments which, on any computation, are necessarily inadequate, but for its ideals. Alien like the American army to the old civilization of France, occupying a position of peculiar delicacy as a dispenser of gifts to a proud and war-glorified nation, it has doubtless failed in many points of etiquette, of tact, of understanding. But the purpose of the American people to help, not as a charity but as an obligation,—that at least has been evident, and has called forth the generous applause of France. We Americans may be proud of this, as an expression of the temper of our people, and the nature of our government. It is not a new manifestation; this altruistic rôle of ours among the nations has the sanction of precedents which prove it genuine. Our friendship with Japan, cemented by our remission of indemnity for damages inflicted upon us on the opening of that country, our



disinterested protection of China, our giving of independence to Cuba, our tolerance of Mexico, our so-called Monroe doctrine, all attest that we hold to our constitution, and recognize in nations as in individuals the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Of one thing we may be sure, that no type of effort could have been more appreciated by France than that carried out by the American Red Cross in the devastated north. Against the material losses of the spring of 1918, place the words of General Pétain: "The majority of the soldiers of France are farmers, and nothing could console them more than to see in their midst the soil cultivated, sown, and maintained in its fertility. . . . The societies assisting the civilians in the zone of the army contribute in large measure to maintain the morale of the troops." Similar testimony is that of Paul Bourget:\* "The French people indeed, are essentially, and above all, a nation

\* L'Aide Immédiate aux Agriculteurs: For France.

of agriculturists. The present army, issued from the nation, and representing it in its entirety, is thus recruited primarily among the peasants, and its qualities are those of the French farmer, of the rough and patient farm-laborer 'attached to the soil he has turned.' Look carefully. This war bears his imprint, for he has marked it with some of his most moving particularities.

"This war is long and slow, reflecting one of the most striking characteristics of our country-people's nature: Invincible patience, the faculty of waiting and recommencing. They possess to a singularly high degree the quality of adaptation, and that quality is being applied to-day in the fighting in the trenches, just as it has been applied in the past, and as it will be again in the future, to the sowing of the fields in the rain, and to the plowing of the soil. But this quality of adaptation must not be mistaken for passiveness. The peasant, wearing a military mantle and helmet, and led to the assault of the German

lines, does not follow his officers in the same way as his flocks followed him when he wore his shepherd's cloak. His obedience is intelligent; this intelligence is another of his characteristics. He seeks to understand. He knows why he is fighting and what he is defending.

"The clear perception of the object for which France entered upon the grim struggle: to remain mistress of her own destinies, has sustained him from the very beginning. He is not fighting for the glory of one man. He is fighting for himself and his fellows, fighting for his own soil. *Patria—terra patrum*—what meaning there is in this etymology. It holds all that makes the substance of human life and its price: the dead and their local inheritance, the impressive recoil of the past, and the presence of the little corner of earth to be plowed, fertilized and defended."

"It is this French peasant," to quote this time from René Bazin, "so attached to his soil, so laborious, in all battles so silently

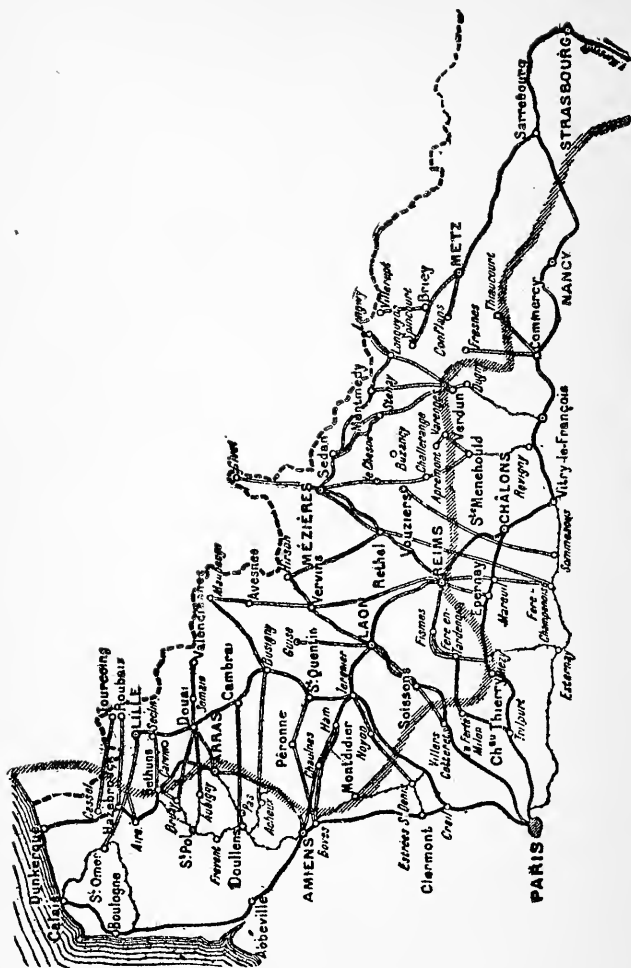
brave, whom you have undertaken to assist.”\*

Now that the battle is, we trust, over, this soldier, yes, the soldier of the devastated area, returns to his home. One hears of him thus returning from the four years of war, overcome and fainting at the sight of the heap of powdered stone that was his ancestral farm. One hears of an officer, coming a prisoner from Germany, unable to find any trace of wife or children or house. One hears of a senator of a devastated department, homeless in a terrible sense, whose daughters had been carried into the most abominable of slaveries in Germany. Up to the measure of its effectiveness, of its sympathy, will the American Red Cross be remembered for all time by such, both the heroes and victims of war.

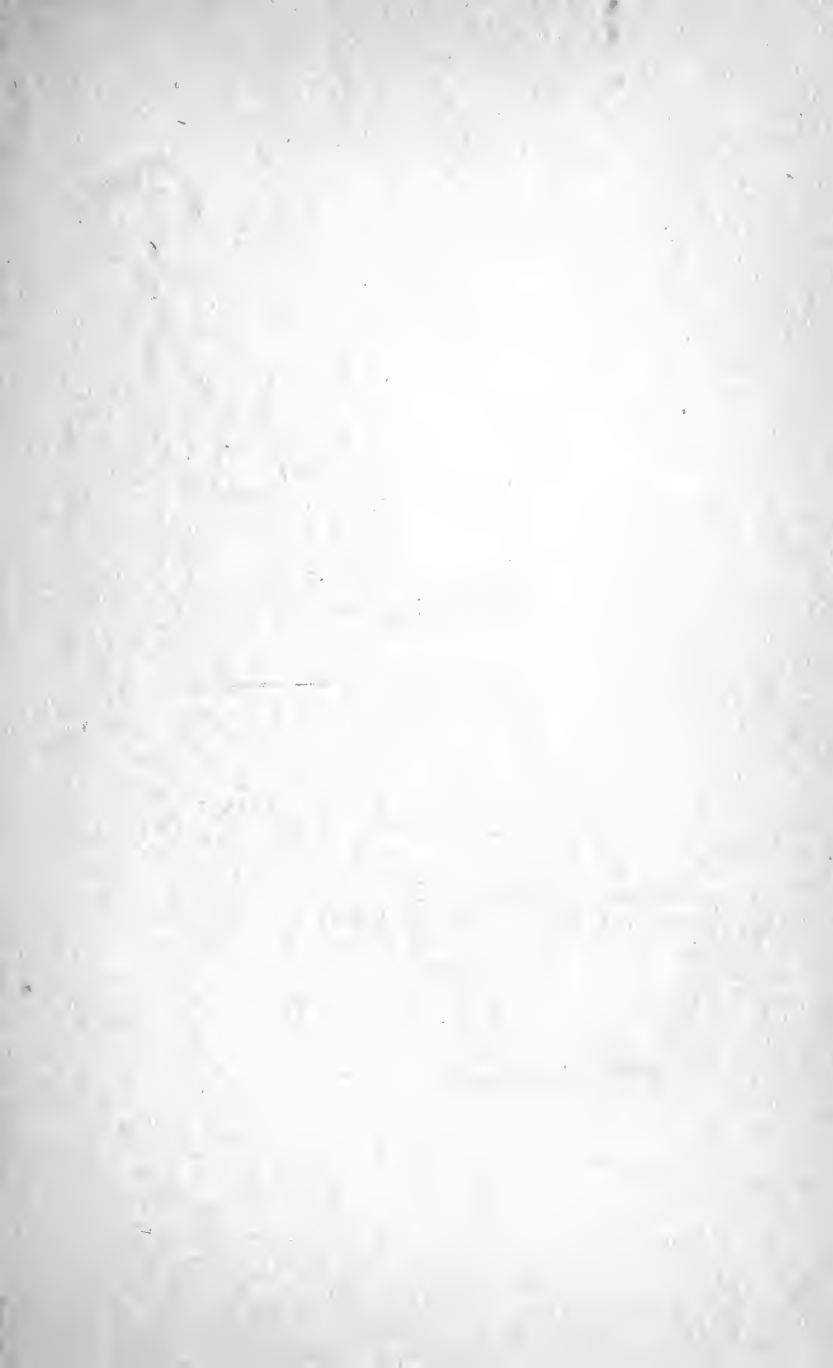
The French, intensely practical, as well as generous, have asked from time to time what monument the American Red Cross will leave in their midst. In commenting on this, a

\* *L'Aide Immédiate aux Agriculteurs: For France.*

director of Red Cross civilian effort has said:  
“We have not a single enduring piece of work  
in France to point to to call our own. Our  
aim has been to help the French in their own  
way. Our monument will be in their hearts.”



*Northern France, Comprising Devastated Area.*



## APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

### AMERICAN RED CROSS

*Résumé of the Activities of the Bureau, asked for by  
M. le Président du Comité du Secours National, in  
his letter of 6 March*

Paris, 9 March, 1918.

The aim of the Bureau of Reconstruction and Relief has been to work with the departmental committees wherever established, to supplement existing organizations, to encourage deserving ones, and to create new ones. The Red Cross is not an "œuvre," but it seeks to help the "œuvres," and occasionally has had to do the work of "œuvres" in places where none exist.

Beside distributing supplies, the Bureau is interested in fostering agriculture and the manufacture, so far as possible, of goods needed in relief work. For this purpose, as well as for discovering the needs of the population in the areas near the front, the field has been divided into six "provinces"—with delegates stationed at Arras, Ham, Noyon, Soissons, Châlons, and Nancy. An "ouvroir central" has been established at Amiens, whence garments are distributed; warehouses at Ham, Nesle, Noyon, Soissons, and Nancy,

serve to store supplies imported to the devastated areas. The delegates work in connection with representatives of the Construction Department, and besides overseeing the distribution of relief, report on new needs, and cooperate in every possible way with the admirable relief work carried on by the French Government and scores of other devoted French organizations. Not long since, the delegate at Nancy put what facilities he had at the disposal of the victims of a recent air-raid; the same delegate has been busy in helping the evacuated population reach the rear.

Among the "œuvres" helped by the Bureau are the following: The Smith College Relief Unit—now incorporated with the Red Cross; l'Union des Femmes de France; Secours d'Urgence; Village Reconstitué; Société Française des Villages Libérés; American Fund for French Wounded; Groupe Parlementaire des Régions Envahies; Bureau de Bienfaisance de la Ville de Nancy; local committees at Babœuf, Compiègne, Ransart; and various individuals.

It is a policy of the Bureau not to distribute secours "au hasard," and in the work of distribution it needs the help of disinterested local organizations. With the needs of the communes stated by local committees, the Bureau can assure a just division of supplies; it will give to those who cannot work, and to those who will work, but not to those who are unwilling to work.

Among the things distributed, besides food and clothing, may be mentioned the following: seed, live

stock, machinery for farmers, fertilizers, furnishings—such as beds, blankets, tables, stoves, kitchen utensils, etc.

Reconstruction headquarters have been established at Croix Moligneaux, Matigny, Guizancourt and Quivières, in the Somme. The Smith College Relief Unit is stationed at Grécourt.

According to the last Bureau report, over 19,300 persons were reached by the relief work in February.

#### PLANS TO HELP PEOPLE OF DEVASTATED REGIONS \*

It is the desire of the American Red Cross to cooperate with the official French effort. We have had our relief experts visit the regions and have had a medical and public health survey made by one of the recognized experts on such matters.

We understand it is the plan of the French Government to cover the evacuated region with various French Government committees. It has always been our desire to work conjointly with French societies and to aid them. We suggested to the French government through M. Tardieu therefore for their consideration, the following plan for American Red Cross effort which we believe would make our aid most effective:

With the cessation of military endeavors, the American Red Cross has a vast amount of material and supplies released in connection with our military operations,

\* Red Cross Bulletin, Paris, Dec. 28, 1918.

motor vehicles, hospital supplies, etc., including a large quantity of hospital equipment, beds, bedding, hospital garments. We have American Red Cross committees all over the United States formed and producing various kinds of supplies constantly, and they will no doubt continue to for some time. Hundreds of carloads of supplies no longer necessary for military American Red Cross Work are even now being received at our concentration points.

### *Large Base Warehouses*

We propose to divide the evacuated area into a number of divisions and establish a large base warehouse in each. At the head of each warehouse we will have one of our most competent General Relief executives. Attached to each will be necessary warehouse staff and a fleet of camions and some touring cars. In these warehouses we will concentrate such available supplies described above as we propose to assign for this work, and such total supplies will be subject to the requisition of and delivery by us to government committees working in the evacuated areas.

In other words, instead of the American Red Cross taking any one section and confining our endeavors to that section, we will distribute the total that we can do primarily in the way of supplies among French Government committees, in that way supplementing their efforts wherever they may be operating.

*Tardieu Endorses Plan*

M. Tardieu, in accepting the plan, said in part:

"Permit me to begin with, to express to you our gratitude for the generous assistance that you propose to give to the people who have suffered so much from the war. You will thus add to the great work of the American Red Cross a new page. No initiative will be more appreciated by our population, and I wish above all to express to you here my deep gratitude.

"The program you mention is quite in accordance with the views of the French Government. The Minister of the Liberated Regions has organized in the whole of the territory previously invaded, a service for the coordination of relief, and the help that you may bring to them in the form you contemplate will be most precious.

"In order to insure the contact between your delegate in each department and the French relief works accepted by the Government, my colleague, Mr. Lebrun, is quite willing to create special committees where your delegate would meet the authorized representatives of the administration of the National Relief, of the French Relief works exercising their activities in the Department, and of the groups of those requiring assistance. If the general lines of this program are acceptable to you, its performance will be placed under the control of the Ministry of the Liberated Regions, to which is attached the National Office for the coordination of relief in the liberated regions."

MINISTRY OF BLOCUS AND OF THE LIBERATED  
REGIONS

March 7, 1919.

*Note in Regard to the Organization of the Coordination  
of Relief in the Liberated Regions and in Regard to  
the Operation of Relief Societies*

The High Committee of Coordination of Relief in the liberated regions, which is, in a sense, the administrative council of the national office of coordination in the Ministry of the Liberated Regions, has put in the form of a Recommendation approved by the minister, the general principle of the organization of relief in the departments injured by acts of war.

This organization, inspired by the experience gained in certain sectors, notably in the department of the Somme and that of the Oise at the time of the first period of the liberation of these departments in 1917, has as a working basis the creation of local relief stations serving geographic sectors in such a way as to place the agencies of relief in direct contact with the population.

The conduct of these stations of relief is, as a rule, entrusted to private societies who appoint for the purpose one or several Delegates confirmed by the Administration. In default of this, the conduct could be assumed by some person designated by the Administration.

In a sector of relief so assigned, the distribution of gifts of whatever description should whenever possible

be effected by the delegates of the society to whom the local station belongs. Committees and charitable persons desirous of performing a particular action or of making a special gift in these sectors are always requested not to do so except through the intermediary of the local relief station, or in accord with it.

*The local bureaus of coordination of relief* are so constituted as to be able to serve as intermediaries between the Administration, the local stations, and the relief societies. They pool information, offers and demands, and are the agents, through the intermediary of the Prefects, of the National Office of Coordination of Relief, for the purpose of avoiding, so far as possible, omissions and duplications, and of taking charge so far as they can provide them, of needs which the local stations cannot satisfy, with the least possible delay. The local bureaus of coordination of relief are composed essentially of a Committee comprising representatives of the relief societies, of the populace, and of the Administration, and act, with their necessary personnel, under the direction of a representative of the Prefecture.

In general, the limits of a relief station correspond somewhat to a canton, and the local bureau of coordination extends its sphere to the territorial equivalence of an arrondissement.

Actually, the outlines of this organization having been so determined, the Administration endeavors to fill them out, and to see to it that there remains no blank on the map of the sectors of relief.

For this purpose, the delegates of different recognized Committees, and the principle charitable individuals were invited, in the course of working conferences held at the Ministry, to make known their intentions and their preferences. In this way, a general programme was established upon the agreements reached between the Administration and the different Committees and between the Societies among themselves, at these working conferences.

Meetings have been held since at the Prefectures, in order to reach a definite agreement on these points in each department.

The relief societies, after these conferences, have now been asked to make known their final decisions and their actual possibilities. In spite of the material difficulties of the hour, of which the gravest is the lack of transports, many have already responded and have even commenced to realize their beneficent campaign. Everywhere, meantime, Prefectures, Committees, and individuals fully organized to assure the coordination of relief, are proceeding to the distribution of the gifts provided either by the Administration or by private sources.

The charitable groups which propose to intervene in the devastated regions to care for the innumerable unfortunates of these unhappy localities, and to aid in rebuilding the ruins, become more and more numerous. No mention will be made in this note of proposals of adoption or of god-mothering which



spring up on every hand, and which have for their object the helping of particular localities.

The proper steps in order to effect these adoptions and god-motherings have been drawn up in an accompanying recommendation of the High Committee of the Coordination of Relief.

In order to make a list of the relief societies, French or foreign, which propose to assist the liberated regions, these societies can be divided into two categories: the societies of general scope which assist impartially all the devastated country and the societies of local scope which limit their intervention to a fixed area.

These general and these local societies divide in turn into two sorts of intervention according as they furnish all kinds of assistance (distribution of linen, of clothing, of furniture, care of the populace, etc.), or confine themselves to a particular form of assistance (gifts of agricultural implements, of furniture, etc.).

One must set apart the two great relief organizations which work in collaboration with the coordination of relief, but by special and direct means: *The American Red Cross*, and *Le Secours National* (National Relief).

The American Red Cross which accomplished a considerable work during the period of liberation in 1917-1918, is about to set up a new organization by creating great relief warehouses in the principal centres of the devastated regions (Lille, Amiens, Laon, Châlons-sur-Marne, Verdun, etc.). Its representatives will be in touch with a special Committee in each depart-

ment, where they will be able to find all the information and all the collaboration suitable for seconding their efforts. The American Red Cross will make its distributions through the local relief stations.

Le Secours National, presided over by M. Appel, and of which the Secretary-General is M. Guillet, has its agents in its departmental Committees in the liberated regions. It affects its distribution directly or with the cooperation of the prefectures in agreement with the National Office of Coordination of Relief.

Le Secours National has appropriated important sums from its budget for contributions in kind and for various subventions since the liberation of 1917 up to the time of the hostile advance of 1918, and it has resumed its subventions with a truly vast programme, and means of action which should be especially appreciated.

Le Groupe Parlementaire of the invaded departments presided over by M. le Sénateur Cuvinot sends regular subventions to the unfortunate departments. These sums are redivided or utilized through the care of a Committee which functions closely with the Prefect of each department. A certain number of relief societies, French and foreign, have grouped themselves in general associations under the name of Union des Œuvres de Secours aux Foyers Dévastés par la Guerre (Union of Relief Societies for Homes Devastated by the War) of which the Secretary General is M. Silhol.

*Recommendations Issued by the High Committee of Coordination of Relief, in its Sitting of February 18, 1919,  
Concerning the Various Kinds of Relief Susceptible of being Classified under the Head  
of Adoption or God-Mothering*

The High Committee of Coordination of Relief anticipating the organization of concerted offers for the reconstruction of the devastated regions, and especially of such as present themselves in the form of propositions of adoption or of god-mothering.

In regard to the question itself:

Issues the recommendation that the resources proceeding from these forms of assistance must be applied to special and designated objects and not to reconstruction in general.

In regard to the methods of applying these resources:

Considering that the responsibility of the State of France such as she shall establish by the law actually under discussion before Parliament applies to all the damages suffered by individuals;

Considering on the one hand the difficulty of dividing among individuals the resources necessarily insufficient for the restoration of entire towns, and on the other the necessity of offering to donors, individual or collective, definite and limited objects corresponding to their expressed wish to adopt such town or region;

Issues the recommendation that the charitable groups or persons who intend to intervene in the form aforesaid could fix their choice for the realiza-

tion of the action which they propose to take upon one of the methods indicated hereafter:

*First.*—Distribution of assistance to the inhabitants (beds, bedding, clothing, household articles, small tools for the house, for flower-culture, for gardening, small animals, etc.).

*Second.*—Intervention for the purpose of bringing an improvement or an addition (as concerns what has been restored under the title of damages of war) in the establishment, real or personal, of reconstructed dwellings, notably taking charge of dispensing improvements affecting hygiene, and domestic or rural economy, etc.

*Third.*—Taking charge of sums advanced under the term of loans to losers, to keep track of the difference between old and new (deterioration) in the reconstruction of dwellings destroyed, sums previously constituting by the terms of the law a debt of the war-loser reimbursable after a lapse of twenty-five years.

*Fourth.*—Advancing costs of reconstruction against reimbursement of one part only of these costs by the loser from his indemnity for damages of war.

*Fifth.*—Participation in the reconstruction of public monuments, civic or religious (town halls, churches, schools, hospitals) with a view of allowing to be brought to them desirable improvements, embellishments or enlargements.

*Sixth.*—The effecting of any entirely new work in the common interest, water-supply, lighting, sanitation, cheap housing, erection of buildings of public interest.

*Seventh.*—The creation of philanthropic works or

charitable foundations (hospitals, crèches, dispensaries, sanatoria, children's colonies, etc.).

*Eighth.*—The creation of centres of communal life (Maisons des tous, Foyers des campagnes) comprising hall of recreation and of fêtes, educational library, post-graduate and professional, installation of games and sports for the young, shower-baths, consultations for nurslings, milk stations, etc., etc., and dedicated to the memory of the victims of the war.

# REPORT ON THE AGRICULTURAL CONDITION OF ONE COMMUNE IN 1914 AND IN 1919

COMMUNE OF BABœUF

(Survey made by the Comité de Babœuf of the S. B. M.)

		Hectares.
	Roads.....	5
	Waterways.....	10
	Canal.....	15
690 hectares *.....	Wood and fallow land....	60
	Railroad.....	5
	Meadows.....	95
	Cultivated land.....	500
	Grains {	
	Wheat.....	160
	Oats.....	90
	Rye.....	20
	Barley.....	20
	Potatoes.....	15
500 hectares of cultivated ground.	String beans.....	40
	Sugar beets.....	90
	Fodder beets.....	15
	Alfalfa and clover.....	35
	Gooseberries.....	3
	Orchards.....	6
	Gardens.....	6

\* A hectare is about two and one-half acres.

LIVE

	Horses.		Cows.		Oxen.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
Before the war.....	95	1300	150	500	40	300 to 700
Taken by the Germans	90	700	150	.. .	40	....
March, 1918, stock replaced.....	22	2000	35	1000	....	....
January 15, 1919.....	17	3000	10	2000	....	2000

## STOCK

Bulls.		Sheep, Goats.		Fowls.		Rabbits.		Pigs.	
Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
8	500	0	...	1800	Turkeys 12f Hens 3f	1000	2.50f	50	30f
8	...	0	...	1800	.....	1000	...	50	...
1	1000	0	...	400	8f	500	8f	10	...
...	2000	0	...	25	Turkeys 60f Hens 15f	35	12f	1	120f

CLASSIFICATION OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY, WAGONS, FARM  
IMPLEMENTS

	1914	1919
Two-wheeled carts.....	100	12
Light spring wagons.....	40	3
Heavy draft harnesses.....	85	16
Light draft harnesses.....	60	8
Harnesses for shaft vehicles.....	40	3
Carriage chains of 5 metres in length.....	300	50
Rotary plows.....	50	6
Disc harrows.....	150	30
Rollers.....	50	3
Seeders.....	15	5
Double-shovel plows.....	20	5
Cultivators.....	35	5
Dividers.....	15	4
Harvesters.....	2	1
Mowers.....	20	3
Reapers and binders.....	8	2
Grind stones.....	50	..
Horse hay rakes.....	20	3
Fanning mills.....	8	3
Motor threshers.....	4	..
Horse threshers.....	3	1
Balers.....	4	..
Bean planters.....	10	3
Bean thrashers.....	3	1
Root cutters.....	40	10
Beet washers.....	5	2

NOTE.—A part of the actual implements were rebought in 1917, but most of them have deteriorated.



	1914	1919
Cider mills .....	80	5
Cider pressers.....	80	5
Crushers, compressors, oil cake breakers..	28	..
Cider casks.....	2000	50
Cider vats.....	300	2
Scales.....	50	5
Cesspools and pumps.....	12	1
<i>Miscellaneous</i>		
Wheel barrows.....	..	..
Ladders.....	..	..
Scythes.....	..	..
Pitchforks.....	2000	50
<i>Dairy Equipments</i>		
Cream-separators.....	10	..
Butter workers.....	1	..
Churns.....	130	..
Accessories.....	30	..
Cheese-making implements on two farms.		
Forges—3 stationary		
4 portable .....	7	..
Carpenter shops.....	2	$\frac{1}{2}$
Wheel-wright shop with motor saw.....	1	..
Motors, 2 to 10 H.P., electric motor force .	4	..
Gasolene motors, 2 to 7 H. P.....	4	..



## YIELDS

## Grains:

Barley.....	25	quintaux *	par hectare
Oats.....	30	“	“ “
Wheat.....	25	“	“ “
Rye.....	25	“	“ “
Potatoes.....	300	“	“ “
String beans.....	20	“	“ “
Sugar beets.....	400	“	“ “
Fodder beets.....	600	“	“ “
Hay.....	900	“	“ “
Alfalfa and clover.....	1,000	“	“ “
Cherries, entire crop....	8,000	kilos †	
Gooseberries.....	8,000	“	
Apples (average).....	30,000	“	

\* A quintal is 100 pounds.

† A kilogramme is 2.2 pounds.

	Price Before the War.	Present Price.
<b>Milk:</b>		
Production 10 litres per day and per cow during 7 mos.	le litre 20f	le litre 60f
Total production: 800 litres per day for the commune before the war.....		
<b>Grains:</b>		
Wheat.....	le quintal 25f	le quintal 75f
Oats.....	" 20f	" 65f
Rye.....	" 20f	" 65f
Barley.....	" 20f	" 65f
Potatoes.....	" 6-10f	" 43f
Sugar beets.....	la tonne 30f	la tonne
Fodder beets.....	" 20f	" 80f
Cider apples.....	" 80f	.....
Cherries.....	le quintal 50f	.....
Gooseberries.....	" 50f	.....
String beans.....	" 50f	.....
Hay.....	la tonne 80f	la tonne 332f
	Renting.	Selling.
Price of hectare.....	120f	3000 to 5000f
Net gains before the war, the family living on the farm, approximately by the hectare .	50 to 80f	200f

## DAMAGES AND LOSSES

Two thousand francs per year, per hectare, for the whole of the exploitation.—Estimate of Lt. Fort, service agricole, 1917.

- 1914 }  
1915 } Harvest seized by the Germans.  
1916 }  
1917 No cultivation.  
1918 Work of 80 hectares approximately, harvest lost in seed:  
hay, alfalfa, clover, lost.  
1919 January 15, 4 hectares sown; 496 fallow.

It must take five years to put the land back into the condition of the report before the war.

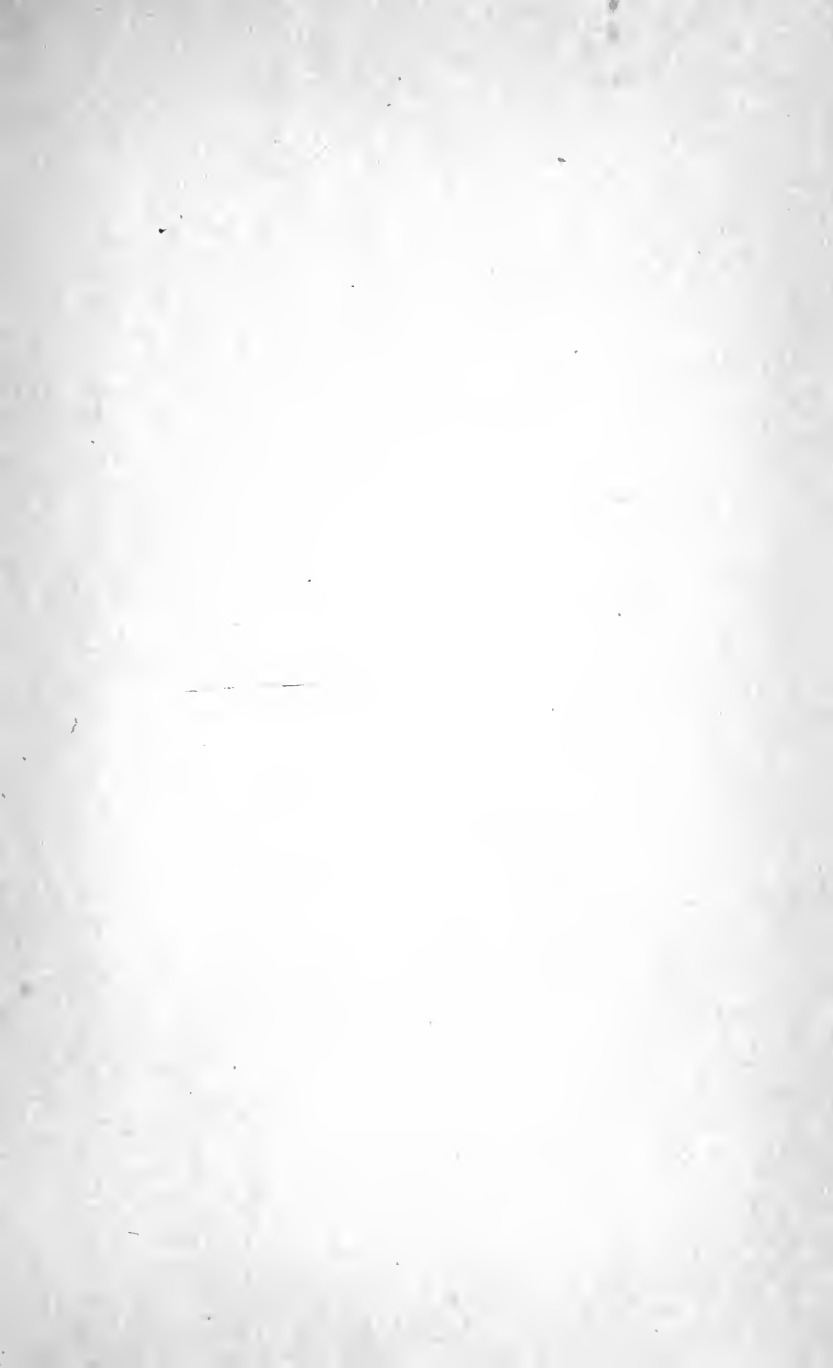
One must reckon 100 frs. per hectare for labor to put the land into cultivation because of trenches, fragments of shells or unexploded projectiles.

In the commune, 200 hectares in this condition.

All the farm equipment was destroyed or carried off by the Germans. 5000 frs. worth of implements of husbandry lost.

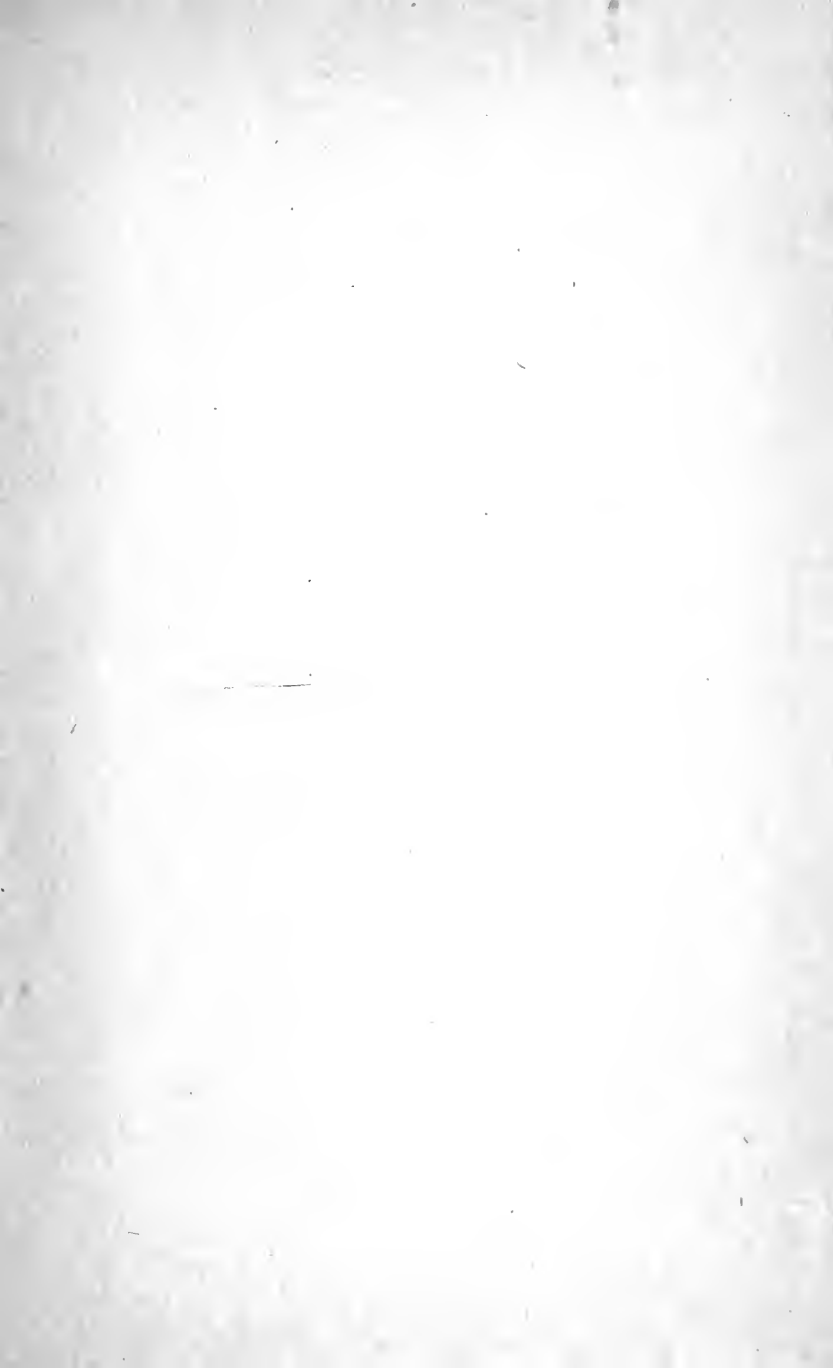
All the live stock existing in 1914 and that produced during 1915–1916, up to March 15, 1917, was taken by the Germans.



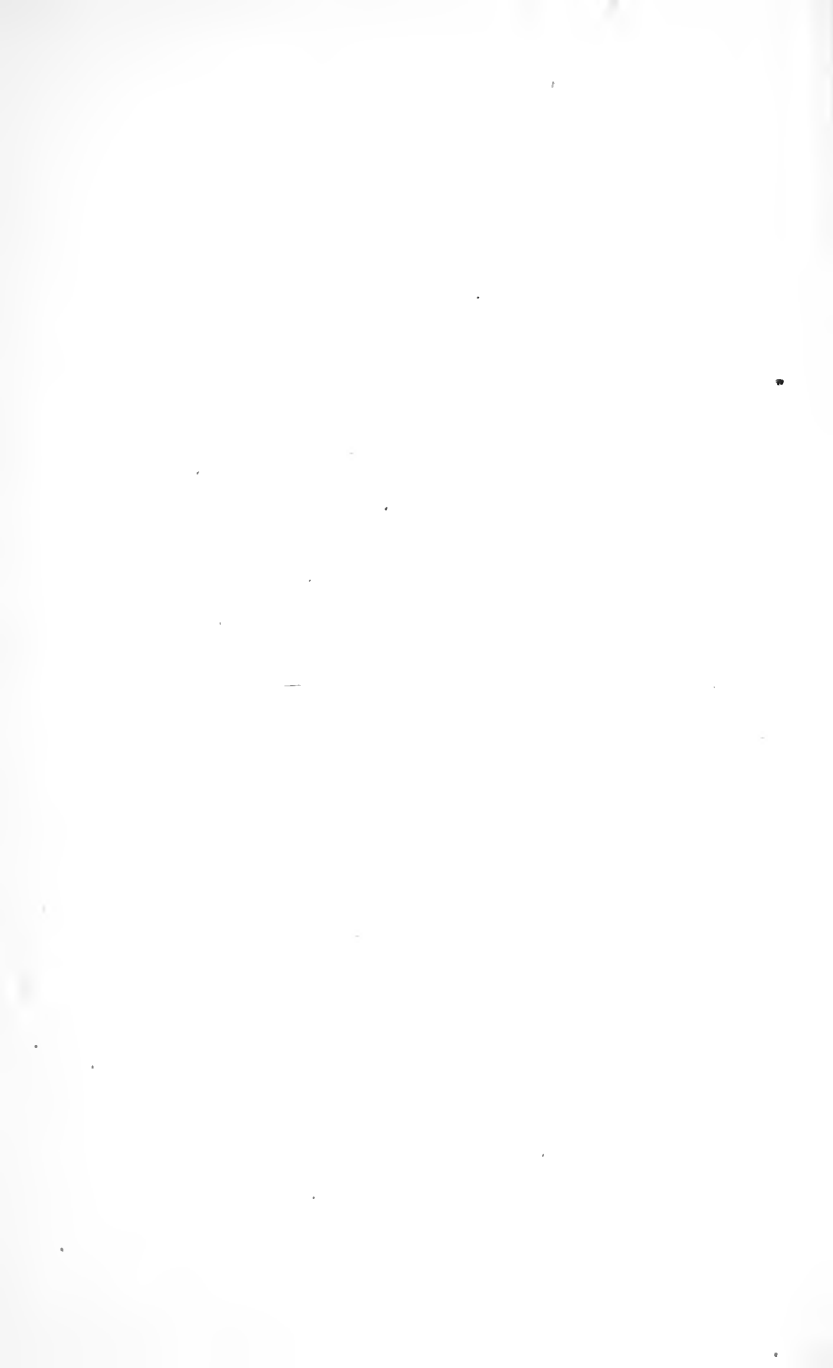












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